Wrath in Burma

US

Wrath in Burma

THE UNCENSORED STORY OF

GENERAL STILWELL

AND INTERNATIONAL MANEUVERS IN

THE FAR EAST

by Fred Eldridge

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK, 1946

Wrath In Burma: The Uncensored Story of General Stilwell And International Maneuvers in the Far East

BY FRED ELDRIDGE (1946)

This book is affectionately dedicated to the patient, long-suffering, humorous, common Chinese soldier in whom General Joseph W. Stilwell has such faith.

Table of Contents

FONTIS
TITLE PAGE
DEDICATION
CONTENTS
MAPS
PHOTOGRAPHS
PREFACE
    STILWELL AND CHINA-BURMA-INDIA
CHAPTER ONE
    The Beginning
CHAPTER TWO
    The Defeat
CHAPTER THREE
    The Flight
CHAPTER FOUR
    The Interim
CHAPTER FIVE
    The Showdown
CHAPTER SIX
    The Return
CHAPTER SEVEN
    The Triumph
CHAPTER EIGHT
    Kandy's Dandy
CHAPTER NINE
    The Recall
EPILOGUE
    THE POST WAR WORLD
DRAMATIS PERSONAE
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
END

CONTENTS

FONTIS

TITLE PAGE

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS

PREFACE: STILWELL AND CHINA-BURMA-INDIA

ONE: THE BEGINNING

TWO: THE DEFEAT

THREE: THE FLIGHT

FOUR: THE INTERIM

FIVE: THE SHOWDOWN

SIX: THE RETURN

SEVEN: THE TRIUMPH

EIGHT: KANDY'S DANDY

NINE: THE RECALL

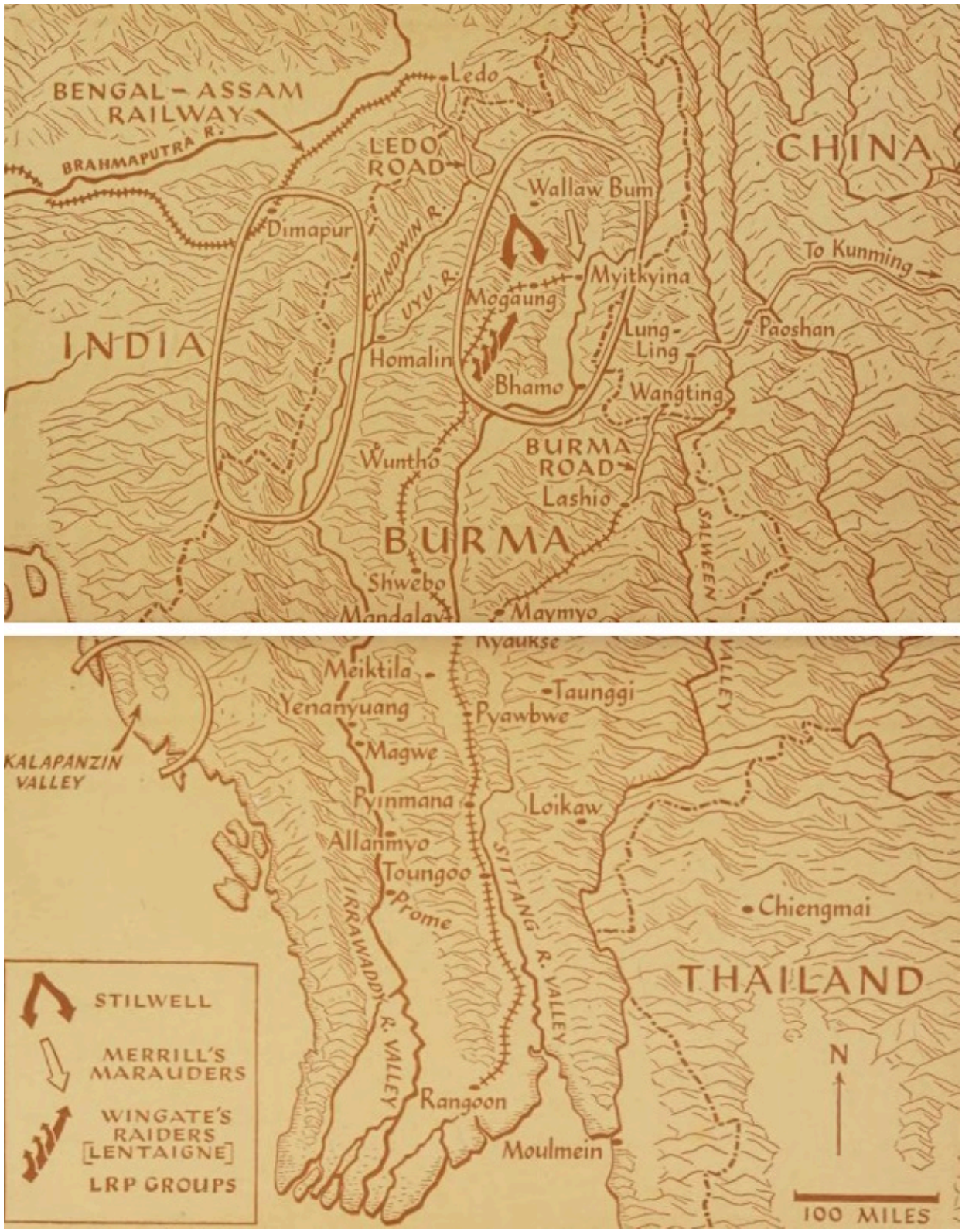
EPILOGUE: THE POST WAR WORLD

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

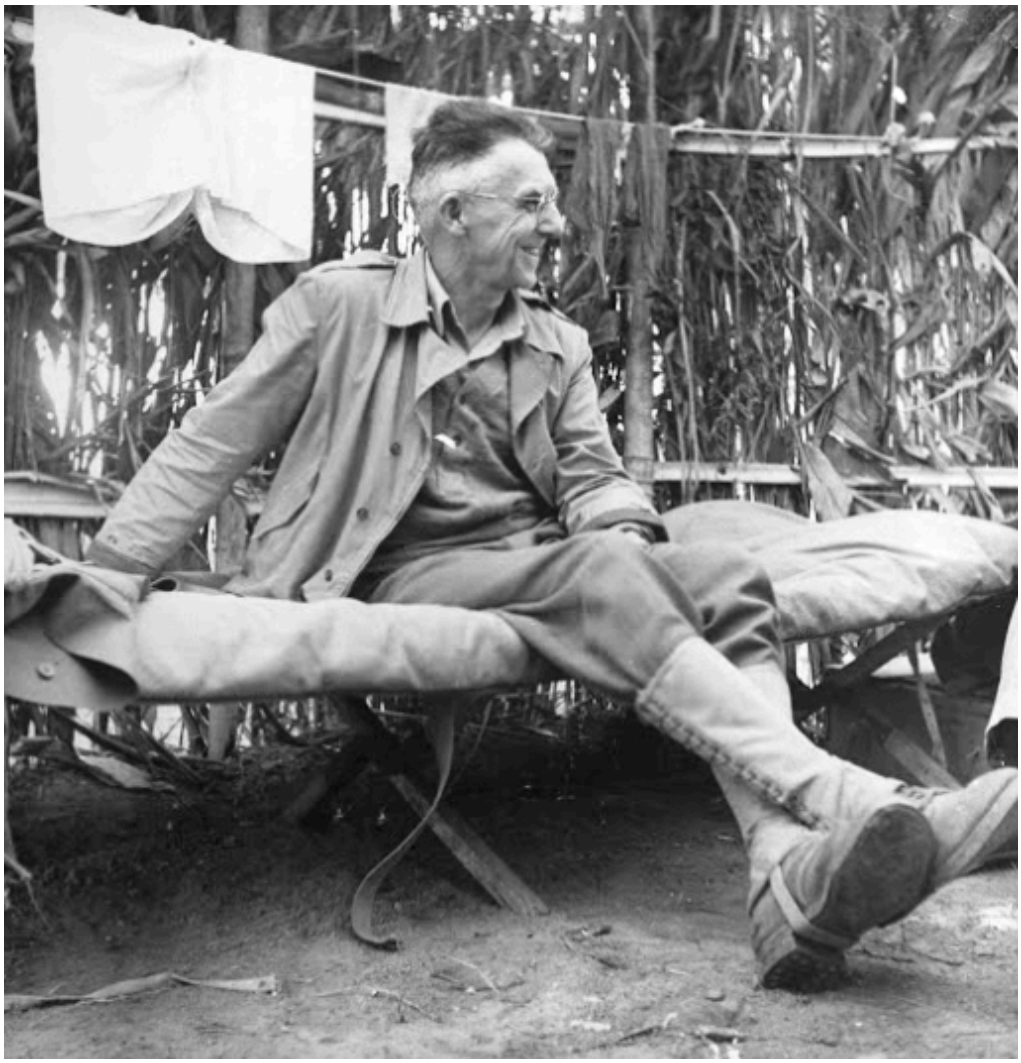
END

MAPS


BENGAL – ASSAM RAILWAY
BRAHMAPUTRA R.
Ledo
LEDO ROAD
CHINA
Wallaw Bum
Dimapur
CHINDWIN R.
UYU R.
Myitkyina
To Kunming
Mogaung
Lung-Ling
Paoshan
INDIA
Homalin
Bhamo
Wangting
BURMA ROAD
Wuntho
Lashio
BURMA
SALWEEN
Shwebo
Mandalay
Maymyo
Ryaukse
Meiktila
Taunggi
Yenanyuang
Pyawbwe
VALLEY
KALAPANZIN VALLEY
Magwe
Pyinmana
Loikaw
Allanmyo
Toungoo
SITTANG R. VALLEY
Prome
Chiengmai
IRRAWADDY R. VALLEY
THAILAND
STILWELL
MERRILL'S MARAUDERS
WINGATE'S RAIDERS [LENTAIGNE]
LRP GROUPS
Rangoon
N
Moulmein
100 MILES

INDIA
CHINA
THAILAND
Bay of Bengal
Ledo
Maingkwan
LEDO ROAD
Kamaing
Myitkyina
Mogaung
Nalong
Indaw
Bhamo
Chefang
Katha
BURMA ROAD
Namkham
NORTHERN SHAN STATES
Mogok
Lashio
Shwebo
B U R M A
Mandalay
Monywa
Myingyan
SOUTHERN SHAN STATES
Kyaukpadaung
Meiktila
Irrawaddy R.
Toungoo
Prome
Tharrawaddy
Pegu
RANGOON
Bassein
Moulmein
Chindwin R.
Salween R.
SCALE OF MILES
0 50 100 200

PHOTOGRAPHS



Japanese prisoner, Burma 13 July, 1944

Captain "Charlie" Chan, USA, with jeep on Ledo Road—
"dry" season, 1944

Captain "Charlie" Chan, USA, with jeep on Ledo Road— "dry" season, 1944.

The Chiangs and General Stilwell after Maymyo Conference

Stilwell leads his hikers through jungle; immediately behind him Lieutenant Colonel Dorn and Captain Young

Stilwell and Lord Louis Mountbatten at Taihpa Ga airfield, 1944; below, Mountbatten and "unreconstructed" Corporal Braud. Stilwell in background

IMAGE CAPTIONS

Chinese supply troops moving food to the front, Burma, 1944

Dr. Gordon Seagrave;

below, nurses at Pyinmana, Burma, 1944

Chinese soldier learns to fire 75mm. pack howitzer, Ramgarh, 1942

Lieutenant General Sultan, Major Thompson, Major General Festing, during Burma combat, 1944, after the retreat

Major Shiney, Major Merrill, and Major Nowakowski rest with Stilwell along the trail, 1942

RAF plane drops food during Burma retreat

Stilwell, with Brown, INS, Wiant, AP, and Berrigan, UP, hiding from artillery concentration

Stilwell leads band to Chindwin River, 1942

Colonel Li Hung and Stilwell check maps 400 yards from Japanese forces

Author and Dara Singh

Mervill's Marauders, 1944.

Buttercup, Stilwell's Chinese orderly

Sergeant Jules (Gus) Reynault, Stilwell's cook

Major General Liao Yao-hsing

Stilwell pins Legion of Merit on General Sun Li-jen, Burma, 1942

PREFACE

STILWELL AND CHINA-BURMA-INDIA

This book will not be very pleasant reading for people who find it difficult to face facts. Those who like to bury their heads in the sand of illusion when discussing the realities of international relations may say it should not have been written at a time when the United Nations are trying to compose their differences and live together in peace.

But that is exactly why it was written. It was written in order to acquaint at least a small part of the American public with what actually happens (and the reasons therefor) when nations try to fight together as allies. Had there been more of such writing in the past there would be considerably less hostility to Britain in America today, because the troops in the Orient who had to deal with the British would have understood, and might have appreciated, some of the British actions they hated with such a purple passion.

Had there been more frank writing about China, the Chinese people, and the government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the American people and the American soldiers might have had a greater appreciation of what a wonderful race the Chinese really is and how it is to the supreme credit of the Chinese people that they can survive rulers like Chiang.

American troops are returning from the Orient convinced of the essential duplicity of the British and the Chinese. They are convinced that neither had any intention of fighting against the common enemy in Asia until America had won the war in the Pacific. In that conviction the American soldiers are correct. But where the Americans err is in hating our former allies to a point where they feel we should have no further dealings with them and should not support them economically and politically in the days to come. To follow such a course would lead us back to economic and political nationalism with all the attendant strife and suspicion.

The story that follows is a brief political history of the war in Asia. It demonstrates from the record how the British, the Chinese, and the Americans were at cross-purposes almost constantly. Had America not been populated by international political neophytes this would have surprised almost nobody. There might even have been some understanding on the part of those who had their illusions shattered by the atomic blows of reality. This is a story about how the United Nations should not get along.

It is built around Joe Stilwell, the American dominant American personality in Asia during the war. It is the story of how this honest, fearless, loyal man was the victim finally of a strange alliance between a medieval Chinese warlord and an Oklahoma politician wearing the striped trousers of diplomacy.

It is written in the hope that sober readers may learn to understand that this, our world, is no never-never land made up of altruistic peoples just dying to make sacrifices for one another. The Atlantic Charter made nice reading but was forgotten promptly when some of the peoples subjugated by the Allies suddenly came up with the peculiar philosophy that it might apply to them.

It is written in the hope that readers may understand that human frailties are universal; that these weaknesses must be understood when considering the past and planning for the future. There is no short cut to Utopia and there will be no approach to an amicable world until petty politicians and some of those we laughingly call “statesmen” learn to speak frankly to the citizens for whom they work.

The international practice of hiding every unpleasant fact in diplomatic relations, of refusing to explain why countries may differ, of destroying records that are the property of history and following the vague ambiguities of diplomatic protocol in dealing with the respective publics, can do nothing but increase the lack of understanding between nations and fan the embers which may flame into the atomic war which, in all probability, may be “the war to end wars.”

CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning

WE ARE going to Rangoon," said the little man with the wiry graying black hair, "to do what we can to help the Chinese and the British hold that city. We will help all we can to get Lend-Lease supplies to China and someday we may train and equip a Chinese army."

Major General Joseph W. Stilwell didn't seem very optimistic about getting to Rangoon in time. "If Rangoon falls," he continued, "we will have to hold as much of Burma as we can and start building a road from India to connect with the old Burma Road and that, gentlemen, will be one hell of a job."

As Stilwell's staff sat in room 2309 of the old Munitions Building, headquarters for the War Department, on this eighth day of February 1942, members wondered how many American troops The Boss would have. He may have sensed this unspoken question because, smiling dryly, he said: "Ours will not be a very formidable force. We will be composed of about thirty-five staff officers and five enlisted men. The War Department is going to send a lot of old Lee-Enfield rifles over to the Chinese Army and, if the ship gets through, we will get about 400 technicians and instructors to aid in training the Chinese in the use of Lend-Lease equipment and in tactics."

The general said he had asked for an army corps but didn't get very far. There weren't any army corps available. What the general didn't say was that so far as possible the War Department expected the British and Chinese to furnish their own manpower to fight the war against the common enemy on the Asiatic mainland.

It was the beginning of the great adventure for this group of staff officers, few of whom had the slightest conception of what lay ahead. The average member of the party knew little of the undercurrents and political legerdemain that went with conflicting national policies and aspirations in the Orient.

With the exception of a handful of “old China hands" they had been raised on official communiqués from China which reported frequent battles in which “thousands” were killed on both sides, and the Chinese forced to withdraw only because of shortages in equipment and supplies. They believed these reports, and their hearts bled for this gallant ally which was doing so much with so little.

They may have heard some slight criticism of British Imperialism and seen something nebulous about the *India Problem*, but they were intoxicated by the heady draughts being poured by the inimitable Winston Churchill, whose defiant snarls and Victorian periods made a sympathetic America vicariously bleed and sweat with him. Few of this group ever understood that without the Empire and its wealth in natural resources, native labor, and worldwide bases, Great Britain would become just 40,000,000 people on a little island, and would be about as important as Italy in the community of nations.

Few of these pilgrims, about to get their first exposure to the Orient, could conceive that there might be something other than the American philosophy of “let’s get the damned war over in a hurry and get home.” Americans are naive and not supposed to know that some nations plan, or delay, obvious military engagements in order to tailor them to fit long-range political considerations. China’s “Communist Problem,” Britain’s *India Problem*, the "white man’s burden,” generations of British-Chinese suspicion and dislike, were all Greek to Americans.

Not many of these Stilwell Americans knew America had a policy in China, or that Britain had a different policy in China, or that China had her own policy for Asia. Americans were isolationists. For generations they had conscientiously kept themselves from knowing such things.

Traditional United States policy in the Far East has always called for a strong, free China in order that:

(1) China might balance Japanese influence in the Pacific;

(2) be sufficiently solvent to serve as a market for American exportable surpluses through the “open door” of equal trade opportunity.

British policy, on the other hand, supported a weak China and a strong Japan in order that special British trade and political concessions could be exploited, so that British sovereignty over treaty ports would not be threatened, and in order that Japan might be a constant threat to Russia.

The first important modern disagreement caused by this fundamental divergence in national aim came when the Japanese invaded Manchuria. The Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, proposed a policy of reprisals on the Japanese but failed when the British refused to come along. It was then that Leopold S. Amery, later to become Churchill's Secretary of State for India, told the House of Commons that Britain could not interfere, as the Japanese were doing only what the British had done over 300 years before in India.

In addition an America, always interested in earning an "honest dollar," continued to arm the Japanese with iron scrap and petroleum products to be used at a later date against her traditional friend, China.

So the Japanese continued unmolested to consolidate their new empire, pacify it, and start the development of an industry which eventually became sufficiently all-inclusive to support the large Kwangtung Army, as it sat poised for the Russians, without drain on the mother country.

When the Japanese struck at Shanghai there was a wiry little man loping around the countryside picking up pieces of solid information on the condition and fighting qualities of both the Japanese and Chinese armies. He was a salty, abrupt, unexpectedly kind man, noted for a sardonic wit and an ability to outwalk anybody willing to match strides with him. His name was Joseph W. Stilwell.

Joe Stilwell was a unique, if little known, character. His command of an explosively profane vocabulary in both English and Chinese contrasted with a puritanism which made him a teetotaler, a person of impeccable personal deportment, a great family man by choice and inclination, and a person who would not get mixed up in "deals." A man who will not deal has an automatic handicap in international relations with worldly and amoral Chinese.

Stilwell loved China enough so that he lived there for a total of about fifteen years, becoming a serious student of the Chinese language, customs, art, and literature. In his walks about the countryside and his tours with the Chinese Army he developed a deep respect for the Chinese people and a creed. This creed, repeated many times later, brought laughter from British and many Americans, but they all lived to swallow their cynical mirth when Stilwell took two American-trained Chinese divisions and won the "impossible" campaign of North Burma in 1944. Stilwell said: "Properly trained, properly equipped, properly led, and given proper food, the Chinese soldier is as good as any soldier in the world." It took a brave man to say that in the Orient before 1944.

Progressively, Stilwell developed a contempt for the practical aspects of the lack of American policy in the Orient. America may have had a policy about a strong China, but its only manifestation seemed to be a lot of vague conversation on a high spiritual level. China didn't need conversation. China needed the elimination of supplies to Japan and a little more wherewithal to do some fighting on her own account. She needed an America not playing both ends against the middle. Whatever may be proven about later Chinese resistance, China did fight around Shanghai for a while and finally quit to husband her resources, because she knew American entry into the war was inevitable and that America would have to aid her in the meantime. There just wasn't any other alternative. The Chinese, being realistic people, asked why should we fight when America, by virtue of history and sentiment, must win this war for us in the end?

That was what enraged Stilwell. Couldn't these stupid Americans see that war was inevitable? Why did they not only permit Japan to build up, but help her do so with oil and scrap, while tossing platitudes to China? Get tough, he said, before it is too late. Get tough before the Chinese Army has acquired a psychology of defeat which could make it virtually worthless, regardless of supplies and equipment.

When Stilwell's tour as military attaché to China ended in 1939, he is said to have applied for retirement. He presumably accompanied this application with a final report which was probably notable for blunt talk. When "Vinegar Joe" had something to say he said it without waste of words. He

got to the point, and wrote and talked with such simplicity that there was never any question about what he meant. That, sometimes, was the trouble.

He packed his beloved family on an army transport and headed home for what he may have anticipated would be a life of innocuous gardening at Carmel-by-the-Sea, California.

It was to him not an unpleasant prospect. He was completing an honorable if unspectacular army career as a full colonel, and he always had spent most of his spare time sitting around with his family anyway. As a military attaché in China he was privately criticized for not being more gregarious, for not being a bar fly and a party diplomat, who spent his spare time developing contacts over cocktail glasses and at stag parties with sing-song girls. He idolized his wife, his two sons, and three daughters to such an extent that he was seldom able to separate himself from them for any long periods of time. They returned this affection with interest, were not overly impressed with "Ol Pappy's" occasionally sarcastic vocabulary, and pushed him around to their hearts' content. Several years later, as a full general, a newspaperman asked him how he ranked in his family. "Just below the dog," he said, an indulgent twinkle in his eyes.

While en route to the United States he received notification that he had been nominated to the rank of brigadier general. This meant that he was not going to retire, and Carmel lost a good if untidy gardener. The general probably wasn't much disappointed, as he was too active to have been completely happy as a gardener on a full-time basis.

Upon arrival in the United States he was sent to Fort Sam Houston, where he was to command a brigade under Major General Walter Krueger, whom Stilwell admired as an aggressive and shrewd commander. Krueger fully sustained that admiration as an army commander under MacArthur later.

American assistance to China until Pearl Harbor was characterized by that well-known British-American disease—too little and too late. A few financial gestures had been made, such as a fifty-million-dollar loan to stabilize Chinese currency, the Silver Purchase Act not passed for China's benefit, incidentally, loans and credits totaling one hundred and twenty million dollars from December 1938, and an appropriation of six hundred

million dollars through Lend-Lease, which represented 4.62 percent of the total appropriated for all countries.

On the combat side Colonel Claire L. Chennault was permitted to recruit pilots and ground crews from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to establish the American Volunteer Group in China, and the British agreed to the diversion of one hundred P-40s for the use of the AVG. These P-40s, it might be noted, were so obsolete at the time of diversion that the factory was no longer producing them. This made it almost impossible to get spare parts.

An air mission was sent to China, out of which came recommendations for a more extensive air program and the arrangement wherein Chinese cadets received their primary training in the United States. A military mission was sent to China to aid in the selection and ultimate use of Lend-Lease materials, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was given American political and financial advisers.

Transportation into China being the key to the efficient allocation of Lend-Lease, various transportation experts and missions were sent to China to survey the Burma Road and the projected Yunnan—Burma Railway. All these things made good reading to an American public completely unaware of the financial, military, geographic, and logistic problems involved, but didn't do much except offer hope for a China on her heels from the effects of a very efficient Japanese blockade.

Stilwell was aware that most of this so-called aid was eyewash designed for psychological rather than material effect. The general whose love for the Chinese was exceeded only by his almost pathological hatred of the Japanese, felt that his government should quit fooling around and get down to the brass tacks of direct assistance to China, even if this placed the United States in the position of a belligerent. In 1940, at an off-the-record session of the San Francisco Press Club, Stilwell declared war on the Japanese in typical curt, contemptuous fashion and announced we had missed our greatest opportunity of slapping the Japanese down when they sank the Panay. Stilwell insisted that war with Japan was inevitable and our procrastination was giving the Japanese the opportunity of selecting the time and the battleground to suit their own convenience.

He may have been guilty of underestimating the Japanese when, in San Francisco, he said he could take a properly armed Chinese Army, with two American divisions as a spearhead, and run the Japanese out of China in six months. It may have been wishful thinking when he said that the Japanese was an efficient but unimaginative adversary, who would become confused when faced with unorthodox tactics. But he proved those statements many times when he broke the back of the famous Japanese 18th Division in Burma, in 1944, using predominantly Chinese troops.

While Stilwell was training his brigade in Texas the first proposals for a China air program were laid before the United States Navy by the Chinese Government. In January 1940 it was suggested that it was to American interest to keep Japan from controlling China completely, and this could be avoided by the use of air power. Chinese estimates called for a force of about 100 pursuits, 100 bombers, and ten transports, with about fifty American pilots to be recruited from the American services and integrated with the Chinese.

If Stilwell was aware of that proposal's paucity he must have snorted. He knew enough about air potential to know how effective an air force of that size would be and how long it would last without ground troops to protect and hold its airfields. Nothing in particular came of the proposals at the time, and Stilwell had been made a major general to activate the 7th Division at Ford Ord, California, when another Chinese air mission, headed by General P.T. Mow and Claire L. Chennault, came to talk turkey in Washington in November 1940.

Chennault had retired from the regular army air force, ostensibly because of deafness, but probably because of his dislike for the niggardly War Department policy on air power. Being a nonconformist, he probably disliked army discipline as well. He went to China and, since 1937, had been adviser to the Bank of China, headed by T.V. Soong, the man who had raised the question of aircraft for China in the first place. This China mission was authorized by the Generalissimo to dicker with the United States Government for planes, American pilots, and ground crews. Active American participation in the development of China air power began with the arrival of this mission.

Chennault insisted that Japan could be denied the control of China with a Chinese air force of 350 pursuits and 150 bombers, all operated by American pilots and crews. A few trainers would be needed, plus the usual spare parts and equipment for bases, fields, etc., This was considerably higher than the original estimate, but still a pretty small air force on which to depend to deny the enemy control of a country as large as China.

Although by tradition the British were opposed to aid to China, they agreed to the diversion of 100 P-40s on the assumption that this air force might hinder any possible Japanese attack on Singapore by harassing the enemy's rear, attacking ports in China and French Indo-China, and sinking enemy shipping in the South China Sea. It was assumed, also, that China would use an air force if she ever got one.

These P-40s, although handed over to the Chinese, did not start moving to China until February 1941. As released by the British the ships lacked armament, radio equipment, etc., all of which had to be contracted for with other concerns in the face of higher priorities. It had been pointed out that China would need the most advanced American planes to be able to fight the Japanese Air Force with any degree of effectiveness, but America and Britain answered with 100 already obsolete P-40s.

After the arrangement for the 100 pursuit ships, little was done about China air power until after the passage of the Lend-Lease Act and Dr. Lauchlin Currie started supervising the Lend-Lease program for China. He took over this job in March 1941 about the time Stilwell was getting ready to take his 7th Division on its first maneuver.

In May 1941 an American air mission went to China and recommended considerably more air aid to China than had been requested by Mow and Chennault and the establishment of primary training schools for Chinese pilots in the United States. This was accepted, and the Government further agreed with the air mission recommendation that a military mission be sent to China to advise on the requisition and use of Lend-Lease. This mission was created and headed by Brigadier General John Magruder. It was absorbed later by Stilwell's group.

Transportation being the key to the whole China supply picture, it was not surprising that the largest expenditure in the early phases of the American aid program was on trucks. China's interior was starved for trucks, and trucks were needed to move goods over the Burma Road from Rangoon to Kunming and Chungking. From 1937, when China's war commenced, she had been losing various life lines. These had been predominantly railways. The first life line to be lost was the railway from Hong Kong through Canton to Hankow. This line handled an estimated 60,000 tons per month. After the fall of Canton the Chinese became dependent on the IndoChina Railway which at first hauled about 4,500 tons per month but built up to 9,000 tons delivered in Kunming. In addition, there was something like 1,500 tons per month being hauled by rail from Indo-China to Dongdang and truck heads in the Kwangsi Province. The flow of goods from Indo-China by truck ended with the fall of Nanning in November 1939, but smuggling operations brought in another estimated 800 tons per month.

Railway shipments from Indo-China were shut off by the French capitulation to Germany. The flow ended in July 1940 and, at the same time, the Japanese pressured the British into closing the Burma Road to military supplies. Chinese ability to resist hit the depths, and British prestige in the Orient reached its nadir. By 1941 the British had reopened the Burma Road under combined Chinese-American pressure, and the road became the keystone of American aid to the blockaded nation. At best the flow of supplies over the Burma Road was little better than a trickle, reaching an estimated peak of 17,000 tons monthly, but that trickle probably kept China in the war.

The Chinese built the Burma Road to the Burma border in 1937-38. It was built hastily for light traffic, at a cost of not much more than forty million dollars Chinese. The Chinese section from Kunming to Wanting was 602 miles, while the distance from Lashio, Burma, to Kunming was 715 miles. This road was carved out of some of the most spectacular and irresistible mountains and gorges in the world. It was a single-track (nine feet wide) dirt road that had a habit of washing out or being blocked by slides during the annual monsoon season. It was an artery that wouldn't have been dignified as a third-rate farm-to-market road in the most backward agricultural section in America. But it was a tremendous engineering

achievement for its day. Carved out of monolithic mountain spines, plumbing the depths of fantastic gorges, rising precipitously to astronomical heights, snaking back and forth, up and down, it represented the accumulated toil of a million coolies who hacked this primitive trace through the mountains with their hands. They cut, filled, drained, and bridged as they and their Chinese ancestors had done for thousands of years. It wasn't modern and it wasn't efficient, but it was an unbelievable job in road construction. By the guts and patient toil of her unloved, unrewarded, but wonderful common people, China cut her way through the smothering Japanese avalanche to air and freedom from suffocation.

Even if the Burma Road had been a good road it would have required efficient management to handle any appreciable tonnage. The road's management was even worse than its physical character. Various political groups in China were using the road as an instrument for power and profit. It ran through the province of Yunnan, whose governor's (General Lung Yun) recognition of Chiang's authority was nebulous at best. Various Chinese factions exacted customs duties, provincial highway tolls, taxes for the Commercial Vehicles Administration, salt tax, special consumption tax, road maintenance taxes, bituminous road-surfacing taxes, air protection, and Lung Ling educational taxes. On the Burma side, the government of Burma extracted a one percent transit duty on all tonnage traveling over the road.

All these taxes were collected by various petty officials along the road, who lived in an eight-hour day never-never land, which had convoys tied up most of the time. The movement was further complicated by a complete lack of preventive maintenance, which meant no truck was repaired (or greased) until it broke down. Chinese drivers, aware of the profits to be made in transporting illegal cargo, overloaded trucks past imagination with passengers and loot of one kind or another. Drivers carrying necessary gasoline to make round trips sold return-trip gasoline on Kunming's black market, abandoned or sold their trucks, and hitch-hiked back to Rangoon, where obliging officials fixed them up with more trucks and more gasoline so they could do it over again. There have been a lot of vicious circles in the world, but few have been quite as artistic as this one.

Administration of the road was complicated, essentially disorganized, and seemed to be without plan or policy except one of making private profits. At the top of the administration hierarchy was Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, as chairman of the Military Affairs Commission. Under him came General Ho Ying-chin, chief of staff of the Chinese Army, Minister of War, and chairman of the Transport Control Board. (In the early days of the road the administration had been vested in the Ministry of Communications, the China Transport Company, and the Southwest Transportation Company. The Transport Control Board was established in 1940 to streamline administration and included Chang Kai-gnau, Minister of Communications, T.L. Soong, brother of T.V., and an executive of the Southwest Transportation Company.)

By 1941 bemused Americans, trying to help China supply herself, were making strong recommendations that the Burma Road be placed under the administrative control of an American. Dr. Currie introduced to the Generalissimo John E. Baker, authority on Chinese famine control and flood relief, adviser to the Government on communications since 1916, and head of the American Red Cross in Shanghai. He received such an appointment from the Generalissimo, and shortly thereafter the Government announced the formation of the Yunnan—Burma Highway Transport and Engineering Supervisory Commission, which would operate directly under Ho's Transport Control Board and supposedly have the power to act delegated by the board. Baker was to be director general. When the membership of the commission was announced, however, Baker found himself inspector general— an innocuous position.

General Yu Fei-peng, former Minister of Communications, Minister of Military Transport and Supplies, presently member of Ho's Transport Control Board, and reputedly one of the Generalissimo's many cousins, was named chairman of the new commission. Baker was vice-chairman with Chang Kai-gnau and T.L. Soong both members. Secretary general was Ch'en Tih-chen, Southwest Transportation Company. There was a Burma representative to be named later.

By July 1941 the administration of all China highways was placed under the control board and removed from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of

Communications and Chang Kai-gnau. Chang was made of stern stuff and used his position on both the control board and the commission to undercut Yu as best he could, presumably because there was a lot of money to be made on the road. The artful Yu, however, remained on top until the end.

Yu and Baker went to work actively supervising the administration of the road under the rather peculiar conditions always existing in China. If Yu received any instructions as to the exact powers of his commission, or the status of its budget, he kept it from Americans. Then the road police force was placed under the Southwest Transportation Company, an agency subordinate to the commission. These factors should be added to the fact that there were still something like seven different commands between Wanting and Kunming. These commands were never given up because therein lay profit, or squeeze, depending on one's point of view. The road was still snafu from the standpoint of expeditiously supplying China and the Chinese Government, but was operating according to centuries of Chinese custom. War or no war, everybody was in on the take. All the old politicians and private corporations were in the saddle.

In 1939 a group of American trucking experts, led by M.E. Sheenan, head of a Chicago trucking outfit, had surveyed the road and made recommendations which had been received politely and gratefully by the Generalissimo. Nothing had come of them except the quick shuffle creating new agencies, in which all the old gang stayed in power on the road, and Baker (plus America) tossed a bone by appointment to the commission. So, following the tradition of American aid to China, it seemed time to get another American expert over to survey the road. The latest victim was Daniel Arnstein, president of a New York City taxicab company.

Arnstein surveyed the road and repeated the old recommendations made by Sheenan and Baker. The Generalissimo invited him to remain in order to get things straightened out. It is courteous to invite one to be an adviser. But Arnstein was a smart man. He thanked the Generalissimo and went home.

Despite all these difficulties, traffic over the road showed a steady increase from the time the British allowed the artery to reopen. Smugglers and private profiteers did well, and it is presumed that the Government got a few odds and ends too. Even though a large part of the road's tonnage went

to smugglers and profiteers, the stuff was still getting into China where it automatically added to the nation's goods, regardless of who held title. Nobody knew for sure how much of this tonnage was being diverted to private ownership, because no competent records were kept. Nobody knew how many trucks were actually operating on the road. Some newspaper accounts said 4,500. Some officials estimated 3,500.

Because of a lack of maintenance along the road it was estimated that as high as 50 percent of the trucks were deadlined a good part of the time. Spare parts were stolen regularly and sold by Chinese on the black market, both in Burma and China. A Chinese coolie could get a month's pay by selling part of a transmission assembly, and could practically retire if he got his hands on a complete set of socket wrenches. Regular foraging expeditions went out to buy back stolen parts and tools from the black market.

All American surveying experts had recommended the establishment of maintenance shops along the road. The more than fifteen government transportation agencies operating on the road needed more maintenance shops and fewer tax stations. The Chinese, while unwilling to eliminate the tax stations, were quite willing to have as many maintenance stations as possible so long as they were supplied and run by Americans. The rice paddies of Yunnan failed to breed many mechanics. So in the fall of 1941 a total of forty-six American civilian mechanics, loaders, shop foremen, etc., was rounded up and sent to China to "keep'em rolling" on the Burma Road. They arrived about Pearl Harbor time.

This group became known as the American Technical Group (ATG) and aided materially in keeping trucks moving. They were a happy-go-lucky bunch. Some of them had previous experience in the Far East, and, to coin a phrase, few of them were born yesterday. While becoming quickly acclimated to the amiable Chinese custom of looting and stealing government property for storage in private godowns (warehouses), they nevertheless trained Chinese coolies in the art of greasing trucks, and did a Herculean job in motor pools established in China and Burma. They were a gay and greasy gang. They were efficient and of benefit to China in their small way, even though the cynicism of experience made them roar with

laughter when inexperienced and starry-eyed Americans pontificated soulfully on how “we must get more goods into wonderful, wonderful China.”

In addition to the road, Americans were aiding and backing the construction of the Yunnan—Burma Railway—an enterprise that didn’t get very far because of later catastrophic events in Burma. Plans were inaugurated in 1938 which called for an expenditure of twenty million dollars United States, for a meter-gage line running from Kunming to the Burma border at Nanta and south to Lashio. It was estimated that 200,000 coolies would be required for construction of the China part of the line. These had to be kept on the job by some sort of medical safeguard against malaria and other diseases, so the United States sent a medical mission at the request of the Chinese Government, in addition to undertaking to finance the railway from Lend-Lease funds.

Early in 1941 America, in conjunction with Britain and the Netherlands, stopped trade with the Japanese. Throughout 1941 the United States steadily tightened the screws, and it was becoming evident that a Japan cut off from rubber and oil would strike at the Indies and Southeast Asia. America was forcing Japan to choose between a war with the United States and Great Britain or abandon her China campaign. By then America, a country unprepared for war and divided within itself, was doing all it could to aid China. Without the consent of its own people, America was maneuvering Japan into a position where, obviously, attack was inevitable, as the Japanese were too far committed in China to get out, even had they so desired.

Where Britain would play both ends against the middle, with such moves as closing the Burma Road, the United States was getting progressively tougher, and pressed the British and Dutch to do likewise. Yet material aid to China remained small in the aggregate. America was unprepared, both in production and shipping, to manufacture and move large quantities of military supplies to China. Even had large quantities been moved to Rangoon in the early stages, after the completion of the Burma Road, China’s physical condition, added to graft and incompetence, would have kept direct aid to the Chinese Government at low efficiency. But the

Chinese complained for publication that aid from the United States was still largely a matter of conversation. On the harp of American opportunism and isolation Chinese propaganda played the song of how equipment and supplies were all that were needed for the Chinese Army, not only to protect the Indies and Southeast Asia, but to smite the enemy hip and thigh, and expel him from China. Americans went for that sort of thing.

So Americans explored the possibilities of air freight lines from India to China as a supplement, or possibly substitute, for the road and the Yunnan—Burma Railway, should the latter ever materialize. While air freight had not been widely explored and few planes were available, China Central Aviation Corporation had been flying both passengers and freight from Calcutta to Kunming for some time. It was fast, avoided the bottlenecks of the Salween and Mekong River crossings on the Burma Road, and required no maintenance except to fields and ships.

The existing route from Calcutta to Lashio to Kunming was impeded by ground fogs at Lashio, so it was decided to improve the field at Myitkyina, where ground fogs were present but not so bad. Myitkyina also had the advantage of being in an area relatively free from malaria, and was at the northern railhead in Burma. It was farther from Japanese bombers, and the short hop from there over the Himalayas to Kunming increased pay loads by holding down gas loads. It was further desired that another field be constructed on the China side at Yunnanyi, whence runs a good road across easy terrain to the east. With the existence of the Myitkyina—Yunnanyi fields, C-47s would have to fly only 300 miles to move cargo from a railhead in Burma to a truck-head in China.

On the assumption that the United States was sincere in its desire to be of every possible aid to China, the defense of Burma was of supreme importance. On Burma depended the road, the possibilities of a railway to China, and intermediate air bases for air freight from India. If the Japanese should attack and Burma fall there would be nothing left but to fly freight over the treacherous northern route across the Himalayas direct from India to China, or to try the impossible task of sending goods in from Alma Ata on the Turkestan—Siberian Railway across Central Asia.

By the middle of 1941 Western observers in the Far East were pretty sure of an impending Japanese attack, and the only questions appeared to be where it would be launched, and when. The general consensus favored the Philippines and Malaya, and the British never considered the possibilities of Burma, any more than the Americans seriously considered the possibilities of Pearl Harbor. The burra sahib in India and Burma was still slightly annoyed by the sticky situation caused by the war in Europe, and spent most of his time second-guessing the defeated British and French generals over gin slings in Rangoonand gimlets in Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta. Polo was still played,and white officers put in less time at military tasks than American peacetime regulars on garrison duty. They lived the good life in their clubs and dismissed the Japanese as bloody little rats who wouldn't last long against a white man's army, even if that army was using brown men as cannon fodder. In fairness it should be noted that that philosophy was not the exclusive property of the British. The United States Navy, if we recall, would steam out of whatever harbor, dispatch the Japanese fleet between rubbers of bridge, and be back in time for dinner.

Stilwell, in the meantime, had stepped up to the command of the 3d Army Corps at the Presidio of Monterey. He had conducted a successful maneuver as a division commander and commanded his corps during other exercises in southern Washington, which went well. His military future seemed assured, even though he was not particularly close to his commanding general, Lieutenant General John L. De Witt, who commanded the Fourth Army. The Boss was fully convinced that there would be a war, and pretty soon. He knew enough about the Orient to know that conflict with the Japanese was inevitable, and presumed we would lock horns with the Germans as well. His training program was hard and realistic, but was one of the rare ones of that day, which not only permitted but encouraged improvisation and deviation from the sacred field manuals.

His sense of humor was still with him, as evidenced by a speech to his 7th Division when they gave him a farewell review. After a few brief remarks he quoted a story he had heard when he was a lieutenant and then ended his speech. It seems that a colonel was speaking to his regiment under similar circumstances of personal elevation in command. He went on and on and

on, until one old sergeant turned to a soldier and whispered: “The higher a monkey climbs on a pole, the more you can see of his backside.”

Stilwell was climbing the pole, but he was keeping his backside covered. He was sawing wood with his two divisions and corps troops, but keeping his mouth shut. He was getting ready for war. He was getting himself ready for war too. To toughen himself he was walking more than half the twelve miles between his headquarters and his home several times a week. He walked all over the Fort Ord Reservation, constantly watching the development of squad, platoon, and company training. He became a familiar sight to all his troops, moving with his peculiar loping gait. He didn’t wear his later-famous campaign hat, and didn’t smoke. “I smoke only during wars and maneuvers,” he said later. During maneuvers he would chain smoke countless cigarettes in a holder, and never inhale a drag. Despite lack of inhalation he used to worry subsequently about smoking hurting his wind. He even quit once or twice for a day or two during the second Burma campaign.

During this training period his obviously sincere interest in and informality with troops made him beloved to them, as he was later to troops in the Orient who knew him. Anybody could talk to him if they could catch him outside his office and away from his two watchdogs, his aide and his chief of staff. He often discussed small tactical problems with men in the field, asking for suggestions. He had an easy manner with soldiers and was very approachable. The birdlike gestures of the head and the slightly mocking, fleeting, but warm smile became trademarks of a man who was later called “the most down-to-earth general in the United States Army.”

December 7, 1941, was one of those wonderful, warm, sunny days experienced occasionally during a Monterey Peninsula winter. It was very remote from war. Although training programs had been stepped up, troops still got Sunday off, and Uncle Joe Stilwell was having open house that afternoon to meet various junior officers recently added to his staff. It was a routine social function characteristic of the peacetime army. The officers were being sure that their shoes were polished and their suits pressed. Uniforms were not worn off post. Wives were going through the agony of

trying to decide which dress would make the best impression on the general's lady.

Older 3d Corps staff officers lazed about the house in pajamas, reading the Sunday papers, digesting the funnies, and discussing post-season football. They were glad to be away from the Presidio of Monterey and incessant paper work, or from Fort Ord and constant field problems and night schools. They growled a little about the Army, and wished that the world would make up its mind whether or not America was to fight a war, so they could get it over once and for all.

As has been reported hundreds of thousands of times, the announcement came that the Japanese were bombing the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Although there had been a lot of talk among army officers about the inevitability of war with Japan, the suddenness and dramatic impact of the attack left everyone rather dazed. They hadn't expected this. American wars didn't start that way. What had happened to protocol? Where was the declaration of war, to be followed by a decent period of waiting while the two sides concentrated arms and forces in preparation to strike?

Officers looked at their wives and said, "Well, this is it," and tried to be offhand while realizing that this certainly was *it.* The wives, dreading the lonely independence of separation, wishfully thought that the war might be over in a year. The possibility of defeat entered no one's mind.

A country which only recently laughed at a Roosevelt request for 50,000 aircraft a year, because it was one of those fatuous and impossible demands of a politician trying to make headlines, now felt that Japan would be a pushover for American men and production. The people didn't know much about sea power and air power and logistics, the science of blockade and amphibious operations. Neither did the Army and Navy for that matter, but they learned. They learned much quicker than their professional and veteran enemies ever expected.

The Monterey Peninsula Herald, normally not staffed on Sunday, telephoned Capt. Fred Eldridge, Stilwell's public-relations officer (PRO) to determine whether The Boss wanted to make a statement for an extra that

would roll off the presses that afternoon. The PRO, discarding his pajamas, donned trousers, moccasins, and sweater, and drove to Stilwell's Carmel home without bothering to shave. With some American generals it would have been a very bad thing to call in that condition, even on Pearl Harbor Day. It would have been very bad indeed.

Stilwell was in his garden talking with his chief of staff and assistant chiefs of staff. They were all in civilian clothes and seemed to be thinking more than talking. The PRO asked Stilwell whether he wanted to say anything to the Herald about the war. Stilwell looked at the officer with a sort of incredulity and said, "Why, of course not. The only military people with any business talking now are in the War Department." It was a nice opportunity for a second-rate general to have gotten himself a box in the lead story by the very simple expedient of tossing a few platitudes to his public. A lot of second-rate generals did it too.

The open house was canceled and everybody was called back to duty stations. Civilian clothes went into moth balls for the duration, and all those who had been playing at war settled down to fight one. A lot of them didn't know just exactly how to go about it, which shouldn't have been very surprising.

On Monday, December 8, 1942, Stilwell called the only full staff conference he was to have from then until the time he left the 3d Corps. All officers assembled in the conference room early and sat around debating future possibilities in low tones. The ancient Pacific coast defense plan had been pulled out of the safe, dusted off, and put into operation. Troops of the corps were preparing to deploy up and down the coast and along the Mexican border, to form what was called the Southern California Sector of the Western Defense Command. Stilwell walked in at last and everybody jumped to attention. His reaction to this routine manifestation of military courtesy was abrupt.

"We won't have any more of that monkey business," he said. "We are at war. If we are doing our jobs, we won't have any time for jumping up and down like jacks in the box. Sit down."

The rest of the meeting was routine. The Boss mentioned the defense plan in passing and warned his staff officers to keep their mouths shut about troop movements, and in particular about the shocking lack of ammunition. De Witt supposedly had diverted all ammunition allocated for the Fourth Army and Western Defense Command (both under his command) to Alaska, where he was said to have feared an invasion by the Russians. As a matter of fact De Witt was not given enough ammunition for both his training program and Alaska, so he called the War Department's hand by diverting all ammunition to Alaska, and informed Washington that without additional ammunition he would halt training.

The corps spread throughout its occupation area with the usual confusion attached to such troop movements, and settled down to a series of phony scares which reached their climax when De Witt insisted that enemy planes were over San Francisco. A good runner-up to that one was the Japanese aircraft carrier spotted off San Pedro by an amateur seer. He picked it up in his crystal ball during a Los Angeles séance and, in the company of a Los Angeles superior court judge, reported it to the FBI. Oddly enough, the FBI made a routine report of the incident to G-2, Fourth Army.

The G-2 phoned Southern California Sector G-2 and told him to get busy and find that carrier. Stilwell's sector headquarters was then located in San Bernardino. This wraith from Davey Watanabe's locker was in his territory. For more than a week De Witt's G-2 resisted arguments that a carrier floating about in a crystal ball was not necessarily a menace to the tranquillity of southern California.

Stilwell missed this odd era of De Witt's defense of the Pacific coast and environs because he had been called back to Washington for the Churchill Conference. It was then that the skeleton of British-American coordination in the conduct of the war began to appear. Churchill insisted that Germany must be dealt with first, regardless of what happened in the Orient. Arrangements were made for the establishment of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to be composed of top British and American Army, Navy, and Air officers. The Combined Chiefs of Staff received the authority to decide on all operations conducted by British-American arms and allocate all resources. Under this super staff the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (heads

of the American services) and the British Chiefs of Staff functioned. Although the British and Americans were presumably fighting alongside Chinese allies in the Far East, the Chinese were carefully excluded from the staff because of lack of confidence in Chinese security. As a sop, the Generalissimo was invited to assume the title of Supreme Commander of the China Theater of War. The boundaries of his theater were carefully delineated so that they skirted but did not enter British imperial possessions. It was a theater within the Asiatic-Pacific Theater, established, except for China, under the jurisdiction of the Combined Chiefs.

In the first talks on strategy, the Allies considered an early landing at Casablanca. This operation, which went eventually to General of the Armies Dwight Eisenhower, was handed to Stilwell at the outset, and he summoned his chief of staff and the chiefs of his G-sections to Washington to start preliminary planning. They worked night and day in the War College for about a week, after which the whole thing was called off as premature. In the meantime the Americans had decided on a stronger military mission to China. The President wanted this mission to do everything possible to help the heroic Chinese Government prosecute the war. The War Department wanted the same thing plus some Americans around to see that Lend-Lease material was used against the Japanese, and was not sent to the Chinese armies hemming in the Communists, or placed in the private godowns of smugglers and government officials, diverting the Burma Road tonnage for personal profit.

Lieutenant General Hugh Drum, commanding general of the First Army, had been offered this spot. Drum, one of the three highest in permanent rank among the regulars (with De Witt and Ben Lear) in the United States Army, said he would take it on the condition that he receive an American army corps. Nobody was sending corps to the Orient at that time, so Drum faded out of the picture and Stilwell got the job, the glory, and, eventually, the ax.

Stilwell's party left in three Pan American clippers. His top rankers departed in the first ship, with the second about a week behind, due to an engine change. The third clipper flew out of New York two or three days after the second. Upon arrival in Cairo, the general received notification of

his promotion to lieutenant general and proceeded on to India and Chungking. He conferred with the Generalissimo, then departed for the fighting front in Burma. After Chiang had accepted his appointment as Supreme Commander of his China Theater, he asked for an American chief of staff. Stilwell was proposed by the President and accepted by the Generalissimo.

While all this organizing and planning were going on in Washington and Chungking the Japanese were fighting in the Philippines and moving with terrific speed down the Malay Peninsula and into the Indies. They were meeting tough but futile resistance from MacArthur's forces, but the British seemed to have neither the strength nor the will to put up a resistance worthy of the name. The British were beginning to lose standing as the enemy continuously outflanked them from the sea, forcing them to retire without putting up much of a fight at any place.

In a feeble attempt to coordinate the defense of Southeast Asia and the Indies, aging, tired General Sir Archibald Wavell was propped up as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Area. His command may or may not have succeeded in delaying eventual Japanese conquest of Malaya, Singapore, and the Indies a few days, but it completely overlooked Burma. Wavell either failed to understand the strategic importance of Burma to the enemy, or else failed to concede the enemy's ability to advance that far. So Burma was garrisoned by two divisions, the 1st Burma and the 17th.

The 1st Burma Division was a patched-up outfit of inferior troops without training as a division and lacking proper divisional weapons and transportation. It was commanded by Major General Bruce Scott. Burman troops in the division were worthless and, during wartime expansion, many of the white officers were taken from law offices and plantations. They were given ranks commensurate with their financial and social standings in the colony. It was the colonial version of the old school tie and played its part in leading to subsequent military disaster.

The 17th Division, a fairly good organization, was led by Major General "Punch" Cowan, a pretty good commander who stayed with the organization until it marched into Rangoon in 1945. The biggest weakness of the 17th was too many inexperienced officers.

Major General W.J. Slim held the field command as general officer commanding the 1st Burma Corps. This command included the two divisions plus a few odds and ends. Slim, who arrived in Burma about a week after Stilwell, was a capable and courageous officer. Later he commanded the British Fourteenth Army.

Until the Japanese could establish their own naval base at Singapore, Burma was threatened only from the east or land flank. Its defense was not simple, however, because the British were forced to defend a front running several hundred miles from Mergui north to the Shan States. To do this the British had to depend on only two divisions which, heretofore, had been used exclusively as a police force to quell native uprisings. Australian reinforcements, which might have been used in Burma, had been sent to Singapore, arriving just in time to be captured when the fortress fell. In addition, the British military commander in the field could not deploy his troops without the consent of the British civil governor, who insisted on retaining the normal disposition of garrison troops in lower Burma. The 1st Burma Division was scattered over 200 miles of front in the Shan States, while the 17th was thinned to nothing trying to cover a 300-mile line from Moulmein to Mergui.

Under these circumstances the Japanese could consolidate and maneuver their forces as they pleased and at their leisure, forcing the British to leave their small units to be knocked off like sitting ducks or withdraw in the forlorn hope that somewhere they might be able to choose a line and hold it.

Without going into detail, the British took one licking after another, changed commanders in the field three times, received the 7th Hussars, an armored regiment, as reinforcement, but always continued moving in retreat, always cut down by more casualties and watching the progressive deterioration of morale until what should have been orderly withdrawals became panic and rout.

Perhaps the only bright side in this doleful picture was presented by Chennault's AVG. Despite being in small force and flying obsolete planes, these civilian mercenaries fought with a ferocity that made them the toast of Rangoon. By comparison, they made the RAF look very bad, and they continued to make the enemy pay dearly for every raid on Rangoon, until

the city was about to be cut off by land action and the fliers had to retire north to Magwe. They shot down dozens of bombers and Zeros with scarcely an operational loss of their own.

While all this was going on, Magruder's headquarters in Rangoon was doing a mighty job of trying to save what it could from the wreckage. Colonel Adrien St. John, a good-living, hard-working regular army officer, distinguished himself by being all over the place like a herd of sheep, and was personally responsible for getting hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of Lend-Lease equipment into China. "The Saint," a great wit, laughed and joked his way through the debacle and kept coolies unloading Chinese Lend-Lease ships at the docks long after other native labor had abandoned the British and run off to the jungle. He kept them on the job by the simple expedient of paying them double wages and bonuses. This seemed logical when coolies were risking their lives, unloading cargo in a harbor under daily enemy bombings, but the British would not raise wages because to do so would "upset the economic structure" and "spoil the natives." It wasn't too long until the Japanese took over the economic structure and the natives.

When it became obvious that the Japanese capture of Rangoon was imminent, St. John supervised the demolition of those sections of the dock area under his control, and burned and blasted them into complete disuse. The British made a half-hearted attempt, then fled, thus leaving it to the 14th United States Air Force, much later, to attempt to destroy the remaining docks and deny them to the enemy. As a matter of fact, the air force also was unsuccessful, as the docks in 1945 looked about like they did in 1942 when the Allies departed.

Political considerations become paramount when the British make any military decision in the Orient. This was never more clearly shown than when the Japanese attacked Southeast Asia. The Chinese, who had carefully refrained from fighting since Shanghai, realized that Burma must be held or they would lose any chance of getting Lend-Lease matériel and supplies they wanted so badly. These were worth fighting for, and worth taking a recess in what later became an obvious policy of sitting back and letting the Americans win the war in the Pacific. Consequently the Generalissimo

offered to send eleven Chinese divisions into Burma to aid the two British divisions in the country's defense. A conference was held in Chungking on December 19, 1941. Present were the Generalissimo, General Sir Archibald Wavell, and Lieutenant General George Brett, USA. Wavell declined the offer of the divisions and the Generalissimo offered a suggestion on "winning the war." "Invade Italy," he said. Later, things like this were recognized as symptomatic of the Gimo's desire to avoid the subject at hand.

Regardless of the merits of the Chinese troops, the acceptance of the eleven divisions early in the game would have permitted the concentration of British forces into something approaching an effective fighting force, and would have put the Allies in a position to strike east across Thailand, with the possibility of cutting the Japanese line of communications down the Malay Peninsula. There was nothing to lose militarily by such a move, and there might have been some gain.

The British, however, wanted no Chinese troops milling around their empire. The Chinese were considered irresponsible in military affairs (which was pretty close to the truth) and dangerous, in that they might choose to stay in Burma once they got in. There was an old China-Burma boundary dispute and, significantly, the Chinese Government was printing irredentist maps showing considerable sections of British North Burma to be Chinese territory. On top of that, the British argued that the natives hated the Chinese and Chinese troops would just cause more trouble. Whether or not that was true was beside the point, because the Burmans hated the British so much more than anybody else, with the possible exception of the imported Indians, that the arrival of Chinese troops would have made little difference in their overall attitude.

This, then, was what Stilwell faced when he entered Burma in March 1942. He met British forces, under a third field commander, completely demoralized and, subsequently, at least, interested only in escape and saving their hides. He met incoming Chinese forces, always hostile to their British Allies, smarting under the latest British "insult" of refusing them until times were desperate. He found the British military and the civil government at loggerheads. He also found in Chungking that America was popular only

relatively, and that the fall of the Philippines was more often than not considered by both British and Chinese the just comedown for a cocky gang noted for shooting off its collective mouth, ridiculing, and second-guessing all the defeats suffered by various British and Chinese generals during the months and years of the war. The Chinese and the British needed that last indignity to the great Americans, because, in a negative sense, it restored some of the face they had lost. Misery certainly loves company during military cataclysm.

CHAPTER TWO

The Defeat

With the exception of the general and two or three others, Stilwell's American Military Mission was unprepared materially, psychologically, and spiritually for what it found in Burma. This mission, which was split roughly into senior regulars and young Reserve officers, did not, as a group, know much of anything about the Orient, British Imperialism, the Chinese Army, nor, for that matter, jungle warfare. It had no particular philosophy or understanding of the political implications behind what had been going on in Asia. Like most Americans, they were immature politically.

To the regulars it was a war to be fought along classic lines, as taught by the Command and General Staff School, and to be won in order to get home. Like most military professionals, they were dedicated to no particular cause more complicated than that of whipping an adversary who had hit them first. The young Reserve officers, generally naive, had some hazy and rather starry-eyed ideas about a bold new world that would emerge from the shambles of the old. It is doubtful, however, whether they thought much about the contradiction of fighting a war to free and democratize its white people on the one hand, while maintaining imperial status quos for imperial brown people on the other. When they did realize this fundamental inconsistency, they lacked sufficient background in imperial economics and power politics to be able to understand the British point of view.

Both groups had in varying degrees a supreme faith in the Stilwell military magic. They had seen his audacity and split-second decisions on maneuvers, which, added to his natural flair for the dramatic, made him appear a warrior without peer. They carried with them the traditional American self confidence, coupled with the usual condescension shown by Americans to members of other races. It should not have come as a great surprise that these Americans were disconcerted then resentful when they started to realize that Stilwell's arrival in Burma was not considered by either the British or the Chinese to be a solution of all problems. It was incomprehensible when the British chuckled with casual irony over a

command composed of a high-ranking staff but no troops. In British eyes Burma was already staff-ridden. What Burma needed was men with rifles. The crusher hit the Americans, however, when they awoke to the fact that Stilwell's command over the Chinese Fifth and Sixth armies was a rather strange rumor so far as the Chinese were concerned.

At the outset Stilwell was sent to the China-Burma-India Theater on a purely training, supply, and advisory mission. His was a job to train and equip part of the Chinese Army so that it might have the wherewithal to defend itself against the common enemy, and to advise the Generalissimo presumably on strategy and tactics in China. To do all this it was essential to keep a line of communications open to China in order to funnel Lend-Lease equipment and supplies into the country's interior. The Burma Road was the only supply route remaining when Stilwell departed for the Orient. By the time he arrived in Chungking the line had been cut by the capture of Rangoon and the subsequent disorganized British retreat north.

The Generalissimo, having been named Commander in Chief of the China Theater, embracing his own country, French Indo-China, and Thailand, had asked for an American chief of staff. Stilwell received this post, in addition to his other responsibilities, before he departed from Washington. Upon meeting the Generalissimo in Chungking he was made commander of the Chinese Expeditionary Force, then in the process of entering Burma from Yunnan. The general was congratulated by a war correspondent on the new title, and replied sardonically: "I don't know whether we should have a celebration or a wake. Don't be surprised if I'm busted and back in Carmel weeding my garden in six months."

Stilwell was one of the few realists in the American Military Mission. When he assumed command of the Chinese he looked over the situation and remarked: "We can be thankful for one thing at least: The Chinese are too far from home to desert."

Pursuant to his orders the general assumed command of the two Chinese armies present and arriving in Burma. He deployed them so that the Sixth Army replaced the British on the Salween River front in the Shan States; the Fifth assumed defensive positions in the Sittang River Valley with the

front just south of Toungoo, while British forces consolidated in the Irrawaddy River Valley south of Prome.

British forces were under the direct command of General Sir Harold Alexander, trim, handsome hero of Dunkirk. There was no unified over-all command.

The appointment of Stilwell to his various positions was the result of different kinds of reasoning, little of which was altruistic. Although President Roosevelt's approach to China was sentimental, the War Department's wasn't. The President wanted to do everything possible for this great and stricken nation because it "had fought so heroically for so many years."

The War Department, under few illusions about the kind of fight the Chinese had been making, wanted to give them sufficient supplies to keep them in the war, and train them to the extent that they could use the arms America intended to furnish. By thus keeping China in the war, the War Department reasoned, many Japanese divisions would be tied up which otherwise could be used against MacArthur in the Pacific. Further, by keeping China in the war, the country was denied as a possible haven for a fugitive Japanese Govrnment, if and when the Japanese islands should be invaded from the sea. There was still the hope that Chinese armies with equipment and some training might be used against the Japanese effectively enough to further preclude the unpleasant possibility of having to use American combat troops on the Asiatic mainland. To implement this kind of reasoning the Magruder Mission had been sent to China first, and Stilwell followed to absorb and strengthen the Magruder staff.

Stilwell was selected on the basis of his knowledge of China, the Chinese, and the Chinese language; because of his knowledge of both the Chinese and Japanese armies, and because General George C. Marshall knew him as an incisive, aggressive officer and a good soldier, whose determination and singleness of purpose were such that he could get the job done if anybody could.

Reasons why the Gissimo asked for an American chief of staff must, of course, be based on supposition. In light of Chinese nature, politics, and

subsequent events, it is reasonably safe to assume that Stilwell became Chiang's chief of staff for the following reasons:

1. It was a flattering gesture to America.

2. It was characteristic of Chinese courtesy.

3. Stilwell could be used to get bigger Lend-Lease allocations from the United States.

4. He might be able to get American combat troops into the line in China.

5. The post was harmless in that it was purely advisory anyway.

Stilwell was supposed to be chief of an allied staff which he did not choose to organize because of poor Chinese security and because of a realistic feeling that it wouldn't work. Reasons for Stilwell's unprecedented appointment to command the Chinese Expeditionary Force are more obscure. The following reasons seem most logical and are tossed in for what they are worth:

1. It was flattering again to America and Stilwell.

2. Faced with the prospect of being held responsible in case of a defeat in a campaign already seriously handicapped, the American general could be counted on to fight that much harder for American Lend-Lease to stave off defeat and thereby protect his own military reputation.

3. Chiang, because of hostility to the British, would not accept a British general in direct command over his troops.

4. The Chinese lacked generals with experience in Western methods of warfare.

5. In case the Chinese should suffer a thorough defeat, an American general would be a very handy character to have around when the responsibility was being placed.

6. Undoubtedly the Chinese never meant to take Stilwell's authority seriously anyway.

Theoretically, at least, the tactical situation offered some defensive promise when Stilwell assumed his command in the field. The Allies were defending up three great river valleys, separated by high mountain ranges. The British were on the right in the Irrawaddy Valley, south of Prome. They held the shortest and most defensible line, and had at their rear the best avenue of escape to India, just in case. The Chinese Fifth Army was across the Pegu Yoma Mountains in the Sittang Valley, facing the enemy with a division just south of Toungoo. The left flank was held by the Chinese Sixth Army in the Salween Valley, and protected by the surrounding Shan Hills.

Although the Allies were badly handicapped by a lack of lateral rail and road communications, their position was not untenable. The Japanese were hampered by the same thing, or would be, as soon as they pushed farther north. The key lay in the defense of the flanks, so a Chinese counterattack could be mounted in the center. Such a counterattack, if successful, would drive a wedge into the Japanese center, expose the enemy rear, and force enemy withdrawals.

British prospects for holding the right flank were not too good because of the condition of the troops. They had been battered about until they had no confidence in their leaders, and were overcome by a creeping and overpowering psychology of defeat. Prospects on the left flank looked better. The Sixth Army was fresh and fortunate to be deployed in what should have been fine defensive positions. It should have taken considerably larger forces to dislodge them. Although the Sixth was suspected of being a third-rate army, even by Chinese standards, it should have been able to hold indefinitely against any available enemy force if its leaders had any military aptitude.

Stilwell believed that attack is the best defense. Just to sit tight and defend permitted the Japanese to consolidate their relatively small forces, to maneuver and strike where and when they pleased. This would force the Allies to fight according to Japanese predilections, and could lead only to disaster. The general started planning an attack.

Stilwell found out how seriously the Chinese took his leadership as soon as he started to put his offensive plans into effect. He had moved to the important central front with the headquarters of the Fifth Army, commanded by General Tu Li-ming. The 200th Division was being attacked, but holding stubbornly at Toungoo, and Stilwell directed Tu to move General Liao Yao-hsiang's 22d Division south in a counterattack to hit the enemy's flank and rear. Orders were repeated for three days, with Liao delaying "to get confirmation from Chungking," and the whole thing finally blew up when the 22d fired a few shots in the air and remained right where it was. In this instance, Stilwell had Tu with him, and both issued the order to Liao, but General Tu is suspected of countermanding it secretly.

Not only would the Chinese not take orders from their American commander, but Chiang refused to permit Stilwell to move any Chinese troops to give direct support to the British. In fact, Stilwell was forbidden to move troops more than one hundred miles in any direction without authority from the Generalissimo. This meant that Stilwell could do nothing to bolster the unsteady British flank which had to be held even to stay in battle. Adding to the general confusion, Chiang started ordering the movement of Chinese troops from Chungking. He ordered the switching of battalions from a distance of 2,000 miles, like a regimental commander in the field. At first Stilwell argued with him by radio, but later simply ignored him.

In refusing to permit the use of Chinese in the assigned British sector, the Chinese cut their own throats by refusing to strengthen their right flank. They weakened the overall command by leaving the already demoralized British entirely to their own devices. This attitude fanned the flames of hostility and suspicion already existing between British and Chinese commanders in Burma. The Gissimo's direct meddling with tactics multiplied confusion. It got to be a big, happy family, with everybody taking potshots at everybody else, and with old Vinegar Joe ducking and trying to promote harmony from his peculiar position in the middle.

As the tragic drama of the first Burma campaign continued along its fumbling way to the final denouement, most of the handful of Americans developed an unhealthy but perfectly understandable fixation that both

British and Chinese were incapable of doing anything, either well, or with honor. This attitude never changed toward the British and had its effect on the future conduct of the theater. They felt that the situation in Asia was past redemption, except by the employment of exclusively American troops, and did not stop to consider that such reasoning might seem illogical to British and Chinese, in the light of the American combat record to date. The Americans became increasingly disgusted, and thought in terms of getting away from the Allies to fight alone and uninhibited. At that time they did not know that this was the antithesis of War Department policy, which called for the Chinese and the British to do their own fighting and lose their own blood in defense of the homeland and the Empire. The War Department was willing to furnish their Allies the tools, but expected them to do the job.

Another thing most of these Americans didn't know and didn't learn was the Churchill philosophy on British conduct of the war. In London, Churchill had a conversation with Ambassador William Phillips before the latter came to India as personal representative of the President of the United States. Churchill told Phillips at that meeting that France fell so ignominiously in World War II because she had been bled white in World War I. Winston Churchill said that this would not happen to a Britain under his stewardship. He made no bones about his intention to fight a *cheap war*. The Chinese were fighting their own kind of cheap war in China, not to preserve lives essentially, but to preserve arms and combat units to fight the Communists and others after the war. By its policy, the War Department also intended to fight a cheap war in CBI. American military leaders were quite prepared for the bloody eventualities in the Pacific and Europe, but were not prepared to lose any extra American lives doing China's job for her, or in reconquering the British Empire for the British. In any event, it was believed that the American public would never stand for the use of American infantry to retake British colonial possessions, except in so far as their recapture was essential to aid for China. But this is digression.

Because of the Americans' position in Burma, they were forced constantly to umpire disputes between the British and Chinese. The British had guaranteed to feed and pay the Chinese Expeditionary Force. Americans determined whether or not they were keeping their bargain when Chinese

complained of diversions of trucks and rice. At the same time, they tried to watchdog Chinese strength reports, which were boosted in order to get more rice and more rupees to line the pockets of Chinese generals.

They watched the government of Burma conduct a bitter feud with the British military. They watched Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith's government disintegrate through sheer inability either to make policy or administer. Stilwell, a great one to coin nicknames, called him *Doormat-Smith*." They saw the military blame its failures on Dorman-Smith and the governor blame his failures on the military.

Spying Buddhist priests, those inscrutable leaders of native rebellion, in their orange robes and carrying the red parasols of their position, wandered unmolested. They could not be jailed. "Religious riots, you know." Stilwell urged the declaration of martial law. It never came. The Army never even took control of telegraphic communications. Critical military messages passed through the posts and telegraph offices in Maymyo. In many cases these offices were staffed by Indians of doubtful loyalty. It is true that they could not break the codes, but there were many mysterious delays in high-priority messages, and others were just lost. Neither the military nor the civil government supervised these offices closely, except to watch correspondents' stories which, it seemed, had an unfortunate tendency of sending alarming news to the press of the world.

And alarming it was becoming, but British Public Relations and censorship seemed incapable of diverting from a line which explained every defeat in terms of successful, planned withdrawal. At Moulmein, a British communiqué read:

".... our troops inflicted such heavy casualties on the enemy, he was unable to pursue us when we withdrew." That was the kind of official publicity that made Americans sick. To protect the integrity of public announcements concerning the Chinese forces, Stilwell had insisted on his headquarters issuing all official communiqués. These were handed to correspondents in Maymyo and radioed simultaneously to Chungking for release, in order to thwart any British suppression. The Chinese agreed to use Stilwell's communiqués exclusively.

Native fifth columnists wandered at will about military installations, and refugees were beginning to hamper troop movements. With the necessity for the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Indians to their native land becoming obvious, the Government was unable to prepare adequately in the way of opening and food-stocking trails. The whole thing was on the verge of collapse when Stilwell arrived, but nobody would admit it—yet.

Stilwell immediately projected himself personally into the campaign. He did not remain high up in Maymyo, the cool, comfortable summer capital of Burma, with the government and British GHQ. He left a rear echelon staff and proceeded with a small personal staff to Pyawbwe, headquarters for the Fifth Army. From there he made almost daily trips to the actual fighting front to see for himself exactly what was happening, and to plan accordingly. In doing so, he exposed himself to grave personal danger, but made himself "face" with Chinese junior officers and enlisted men by appearing frequently in areas where the presence of a high-ranking Chinese general would have been rare. Regardless of "face," Stilwell knew he had to make these trips. He knew enough of Chinese methods and psychology to know that he could not depend on Tu for accurate tactical reports and intelligence. He was aware that in adversity Chinese cover up to save face. In holding their own or winning, they spin artistic fairy tales of exaggeration to make themselves seem more important. These are national characteristics as old as China, and seem to stem from an institutional sense of inferiority. Then, too, it was naturally difficult, if not impossible, for Stilwell to keep himself out of the thick of things. He could not be a "headquarters general," sitting back looking at the big picture with sympathetic detachment. He seemed to thirst for the action, smoke, and blood of actual combat. He was a man without normal physical fear, and his desire to carry out his mission in CBI became a crusade in every sense of the word.

There was an amusing incident at Pyawbwe. Four Japanese fighters came over to strafe, catching Stilwell in a position of meditation on the latrine. Major Frank Merrill, his liaison officer with the British 1st Burma Corps, who later commanded Merrill's Marauders, was manning the heaviest weapon about, a Bren gun. As Merrill fired a clip on one pass, Stilwell

roared from inside the bungalow, "The bastards have caught me with my pants down, but I'll be down to help you by the time they get back."

Merrill made daily and sometimes twice-daily trips to the British front to confer with General Slim, whose headquarters was about 100 miles away across a range of mountains. Although Stilwell had neither radio nor telephone communication with Slim, he always knew the British picture through Merrill.

Alexander's plan was to hold a defensive line running east and west from Prome, through Toungoo. That was the plan. As before, it permitted the Japanese to maneuver and strike according to their own desires and leisure. It came as a shock when the man Stilwell suddenly came up with a plan calling for an attack. The Japanese build-up in Burma was still small enough to make a coordinated Allied offensive practical. Stilwell wanted Slim to attack on the Irrawaddy front, with his armor closely followed by his infantry, while the 200th was to hold at Toungoo. The 22d would be brought down in a flanking movement, and the whole thing would be coordinated to hit simultaneously. Slim asked Stilwell his objective. "Rangoon," the general said, without batting an eye. Slim fully agreed with the plan.

Alexander was conferring in Chungking when this plan was put into execution. The British kicked off from Prome and, surprising almost everybody, the 7th Hussars broke through nicely with their tanks and gained about seven miles. Initially, the infantry followed closely but became involved in mopping up Japanese parties along the road. While doing this, a mixed force of Japanese and Burmans crossed the Irrawaddy undetected and cut in behind them. The entire force had to return to Prome to get out safely. The basic reason for the failure was lack of air reconnaissance permitting the mixed force to move north on the west bank without British knowledge. The 22d found it could not move because "its troop train had been late, as it was not ready, and because it had to get the order confirmed from Chungking." The division did not move. What became the only offensive plan of the Burma campaign ended in confusion and recrimination.

The British blamed the failure on the Chinese, and the Chinese blamed it on the British. The British, smarting under a long succession of reverses, aggravated by sarcastic remarks from Chinese and American leaders, openly jeered at “Stilwell’s great Chinese offensive.” General Tai An-lan's 200th Division, which for thirteen days had put up a truly heroic defense of Toungoo, had to withdraw at last. Minus 1,000 dead, the division pulled out to accuse the British of being responsible. British supply liaison officers, the Chinese said, had run off, leaving the 200th to starve. The British countered by stating flatly that General Tai An-lan had removed the liaison officers from his headquarters to a place so far in the rear that they were cut off when the Japanese encircled the Chinese on three sides. On the basis of later experience with Chinese reception of American liaison officers, the British explanation seems more logical.

So, in the middle of the battle Stilwell was forced to make a trip to Chungking in order to explain the situation to Chiang and get his command situation straightened out. In addition to the Chinese refusal to obey his orders, the Americans were confused by the recent arrival in Maymyo of General Wong, purportedly sent by Chiang to visit Alexander’s headquarters. Wong very carefully pointed out to British staff officers that Stilwell was not in command of the Fifth and Sixth armies. This also confused the British, who were becoming more and more perplexed over Stilwell’s official position.

At about the time Stilwell departed for Chungking to get his command status straightened out, Alexander returned and announced that the Gissimo had accepted him as Supreme Allied Commander for the Burma campaign. To American staff officers this was heresy; to the British, it was the first face-saving event in many months; to the Chinese, it was accepted blandly as “another rumor.” In any event, it was Stilwell who insisted on the Alexander appointment because he felt unity would be impossible otherwise.

This is hard to understand, but, by and large, the Chinese were enjoying themselves. For the first time in years they were getting enough to eat. They were being paid by the British in uninflated currency. They were getting a modicum of medical attention for the first time in their lives, and looting,

though slim by European war standards, was a bonanza in the eyes of goods-starved Chinese. It didn't really matter to them who received the kudos of commander. Only one Chinese division had actually had to fight, while liaison officers, like General Ho in Maymyo, had moved into comfortable bungalows furnished by the British. Ho brought his family with him and was chauffeured about the cool hill station in a Lend-Lease Buick, run on British gasoline. He was feeling no pain.

The medical service was not elaborate, as we shall see, but it was something the like of which the Chinese had never dreamed. When Stilwell arrived in Burma, a stocky, homely, American Baptist medical missionary with great flaring nostrils called on him. "I am Dr. Seagrave," he said, "and I have a doctor or two and some Burman girls who are good nurses. I should like to establish hospitals for the Fifth or Sixth armies, or do anything else you might like." Stilwell asked a few questions, and nervous, chain-smoking Gordon S. Seagrave was on his way to become a major in the United States Army Medical Corps.

Seagrave split his small missionary unit in two, leaving British Dr. Ted Gurney to run the installation for the Sixth Army while he came to the Fifth Army front. To aid him, Stilwell sent for Captain John Grindlay, former Mayo Clinic abdominal surgeon stationed in Chungking, and Captain D.M. O'Hara, a dental officer who came to Burma with The Boss.

Seagrave also had the aid of the heroic Friends Ambulance Corps, a group of British Quakers who, as such, were conscientious objectors but who turned out to be about the bravest and most self-sacrificing people in the campaign. They brought in the Chinese wounded, often picking them up under shellfire.

Handling supply and evacuation to the rear were General Robert (Bobby) Lim, famous director of Chinese Red Cross and an assistant to the Surgeon General of the Chinese Army, and Colonel Robert P. Williams, Stilwell's medical officer.

The Sixth Army had settled down in the beautiful Shan States, hoarding rice and charging the British with failure to provide it. These excess stores were later acquired by the Japanese when the entire Sixth was routed by one

Japanese reinforced regiment. The Fifth Army, deployed south of Mandalay, was living as comfortably as possible for an army in the field. It had plenty of rice and vegetables and found sufficient pigs, cattle, and poultry about the countryside to set a table which, by recent Chinese standards, was a groaning board indeed.

Meat and vegetables were being supplied largely by Brayton C. Case, another Baptist missionary. B.C. Case ran an agricultural experimental farm in Pyinmana and knew all the native dialects. He planted gardens and bought animals and poultry. He was an odd big man in his fifties, who was responsible for finding the food and native porters which permitted Stilwell to escape Burma alive at a later date. Case was drowned finally in a monsoon flood in North Burma while looking for sites to plant his beloved gardens to feed Chinese troops. He was a loyal and selfless man.

In the meantime the first division of a third Chinese Army, the Sixty-sixth, was starting to enter Burma. The divisional commander reached Maymyo in typical Chinese fashion. He carried a suitcase loaded with Chinese bank notes. He reported to Stilwell and vanished for a day or two while he got the money changed into rupees at the fixed rather than the black market rate. This was a very profitable enterprise, as Americans who later flew "The Hump" learned.

The Chinese are supreme realists, and the naming of foreign commanders over them probably was of little real significance. Being masters of the delicate art of double talk and procrastination, they expected to continue to fight according to traditional Chinese standards and convenience. They would do a little fighting, yes, but they also would do a little business and live the good life for a while. No Chinese official wanted to go home, but they probably overlooked one bet. It is possible that the Chinese commanders looked upon this campaign as an extension of the type of warfare which had existed in China since the fall of Shanghai. In China, the Japanese had taken what territory they wanted and had settled down to exploit and pacify it. There was no more fighting, and aggressive enemy troop movements consisted of rice raids, before which the Chinese retired and then recaptured the territory in question after the Japanese had picked up their rice and gone back to their original bases.

The Chinese Army which, because of governmental neglect, inefficiency, lack of transportation, and corruption, must actually support itself in the field, went in business with the local peasantry and, in many cases, with the enemy. It was a relatively simple matter for Chinese civilians to travel through enemy and Chinese lines between Chungking and Shanghai, for instance. It was simple, that is, if one had the price. Smuggling went on between the two forces, and it was generally conceded that the Chinese and the Japanese had an equitable partnership in a ferry at one point along the Yellow River.

This sort of thing is not treason to the Chinese. They are a supremely practical people. They have a quaint belief in sustaining life, so, if the government will not furnish the food, clothing, and cash to do so, it seems only logical to deal with whoever can furnish such requirements. Bewildered Westerners find it hard to understand that Chinese lack patriotism. There is little or no loyalty to the national government from the common people, nor to the various provisional governments, for that matter. Chinese loyalty is to the family, not to the state.

Yet they are a great and courageous race of people, with a fine civilization, in a setting of medieval government and technology. The Chinese meet the most incredible adversities without complaint and never lose a most delightful sense of humor. As Brooks Atkinson, New York Times war correspondent once wrote, the common Chinese "is the glory of China."

A Chinese soldier will steal anything, from a baby buggy to the portrait of an American's pretty wife, simply because he has never had anything in his life. He will carry with him any kind of loot, from castoff shoes three times too large to rupees from a looted English bank. Looting, however, is a characteristic not confined to the Chinese, and one which reached its ultimate refinement among American forces, which stripped Germany of everything from silverware and jewelry to civilian automobiles, personal radios, and polo ponies.

If the Chinese generals felt that the Burma campaign would be an extension of the businesslike war of China, they discovered their mistake in due course and with a vengeance. The Japanese objective was to capture all Burma, with the dual purpose of driving a wedge between India and China,

the only possible Allied offensive bases in Asia, and protecting their Malay-Indo-China flank. The Japanese were not indulging in any monkey business, rice raids, nor maneuvers to train green troops. They were out to clear Burma before the monsoon, and to cripple the defending forces sufficiently to delay indefinitely any planned comeback.

They were now fighting in the open country south of Mandalay, and up the Irrawaddy Valley, against an enemy demoralized or procrastinating at the bottom, and still disorganized at the top. They had sufficient air power, while the Allies depended on the few obsolete planes flown by the RAF and seldom more than fifteen to twenty P-40s flown by Chennault's American Volunteer Group.

The appointment of Alexander as Supreme Allied Commander, while distasteful to Americans on partisan grounds, was sensible in that for the first time there seemed to be some hope for a unified command, the lack of which had doubled the Allied muddle.

Stilwell returned from Chungking accompanied by the Gissimo, the Madame, and General Lo Cho-ying. Also in the party was Dr. Hollington Tong, of the Ministry of Information, author of the classic Chinese war communiqués which had given him the reputation of being the finest writer of fiction in the Orient.

It was made abundantly clear that Stilwell was in command of the Chinese Expeditionary Force, and that General Lo Cho-ying, who was an old Kuomingtang general, would act as Stilwell's executive and see that the latter's orders were carried out. Stilwell was given authority to execute recalcitrant Chinese generals. The Chinese Army commanders were called in and so informed. To the uninitiated it looked like the end of trouble at the top.

During the course of the Maymyo conference, bombed once by twenty-seven Jap bombers, the shadow of what was to come was present again. Through the Madame, the Gissimo curtly ordered Alexander to prepare a plan for the defense of Burma and submit it to him in Chungking for approval. Technically Chiang had no authority to command in Burma.

Boundaries of his theater kept him out of the Empire, and operational control of all forces in Burma ran from Wavell to Alexander.

From Alexander it ran to British forces and to Stilwell, presumably commanding the Chinese armies. The Gissimo had administrative control only over his troops. He could withdraw them to China if he saw fit, but could not deploy them tactically in Burma. Despite this, Chiang demanded the right to approve a Burma defense plan, and Alexander agreed, although the demand was in violation of agreements and a backhanded slap at Wavell and the British command in general. Adding to the general spirit of brotherly love, General Tu had looked Alexander in the eye a day or two previously and asked calmly: "When do you British propose to stop and fight?"

That was a tough one to answer, but it was agreed that the British would retire to Allanmyo and hold there while the Chinese would retire to Pyinmana and hold. There was some talk about a general counter-offensive, but talk of counter-offensives was beginning to lack reality.

While the Generalissimo was in Maymyo, Mandalay was burning to the ground. Imperial garrison troops had done little or nothing either to control the fires or bury the dead, strewn rotting about the city and floating bloated in the moat. What Japanese bombers had failed to accomplish Burman traitors took care of. What was left of the population was getting out of control, so Alexander asked Chiang for one regiment of the 38th Division (vanguard of the Sixty-sixth Army) to garrison the town. The request was granted, and a division was lost to the front in order to protect the rear.

The rear was becoming more and more chaotic. Railway personnel, like the Civil Service and the trades, was composed of Indians. The Burmans hated the British, but they probably hated these bewildered Indians even more. Railway stations were unguarded, permitting the Burmans to decapitate Indian employees casually and at leisure. They used a dah, equivalent to an American corn knife. Indians, having little stomach for assured self-liquidation, departed in large numbers. Others fled when they learned that white officials had abandoned them to their collective fate in the face of an onrushing enemy.

It must be realized that these Indians, in the last analysis, had nothing to stay for except their jobs. Burma, and possibly India, might pass to Japanese control, but to the Indian this was merely to work for one master instead of another. It was better to lose one's job than to lose one's head. A person could always get another job, while the Hindu philosophy of reincarnation was not so strong as to make an Indian worker stick his neck out for the dah, sublime in the faith that he would become a ruling prince in a later reincarnation.

The Burmans hated the Indians as another alien race imported by the British to take over practically all the non-agrarian and non-executive jobs in Burma. The Burmans tilled the soil, sat on their haunches smoking Burma cheroots with almond-eyed stoicism, and polished off Indians whenever it was convenient.

In addition, the Burmans systematically destroyed what was left of every village after a Japanese bombing. The enemy air force was bombing all towns and villages along the railway, destroying supplies, rolling stock, and trackage. As the bombers would depart, the Burmans would move in by night, torches in hand, to raze these hopeless communities to the ground. Fire seemed to be their element, as they pin-pointed each Allied concentration with jungle fires which could lead enemy bombers to these objectives by night or by day almost as surely as radio direction beams.

Against this the British seemed to have no answer. There were already insufficient troops to garrison public utilities and other strategic areas in the rear. The native police force was both unreliable and becoming increasingly conspicuous by its absence. The British had no propaganda for the natives of Burma, except advice to remain calm. At the same time, they suppressed well-known facts and made false statements concerning British reverses, which led to fantastic rumors and, at times, quite unnecessary panic. Both civil and military British publicists were urged by Americans either to make truthful announcements or at least to shut up, on the ground that this might restore some confidence in the people. Such advice, however, had become obsolete by that time, because nothing the British could have said would have been believed any longer by the natives.

John Davies, a member of the State Department serving as Stilwell's political adviser, suggested to the governor of Burma that a statement be issued, promising Burma her independence after the war, to counteract the very effective Japanese propaganda of "Asia for the Asiatics." Dorman-Smith replied that a solid Allied victory would do more to counteract Japanese propaganda than all the pronouncements in the world. In this he was probably correct, but had there been something like independence offered the Burmans at the start of the war that they could have believed in, there might have been a friendly population supporting the Allies and, as such, contributing to possible victories. In any event, any announcement on Burma independence would have to come from the Churchill level and not from a colonial governor.

The British had agreed to stand at Allanmyo following the failure at Prome. Stilwell had decided to withdraw to Pyinmana, where he would have one division get its teeth into the Japanese and use two others in a double envelopment. It looked good on paper, but everybody was pessimistic because the maneuver depended on the British holding at Allanmyo, thereby covering the Chinese flank, and on the Chinese actually doing what they were told. Despite Chiang's orders to his commanders,there was little concrete evidence that the Chinese would take Stilwell's orders.

The Japanese were pushing the British north with a force, progressively larger elements of which could be switched to other fronts, as whatever combat efficiency was left among the British vanished. The British, Burman, and Indian troops were terribly beaten up, exhausted, and without faith in their commanders. They were not even delaying the Japanese by demolition of bridges as they retreated. The British Tommies, among the most courageous soldiers in the world, were deserting in such numbers that it became necessary to establish special British MP stations in Mandalay to pick them up as they headed for China. Over and over again one would hear them say: "I'll never fight for the Empire again." Others announced that they would fight with the Yanks or the Chinese Army.

This disintegration gave the enemy more troops to disengage from the British front and use elsewhere. In addition, the long lull on the Sixth Army's Shan front was beginning to worry American staff officers. Where

there had been some confidence in the fighting ability of the Fifth Army at the start of Chinese participation, there was little or none in the Sixth. The Sixth was considered to be a third-rate warlord army with an incompetent commander, General Kan. It was felt that the Japanese might attack the Sixth Army from Chiengmai, Thailand. It was also conceded that the Japanese, by holding the initiative, could maneuver their forces as they saw fit, forcing the Allies to meet their enemy when and where the latter desired. The Allies were very much like a punch-drunk fighter answering the bell for every round, being outfought and outgeneraled, but dumbly hoping he could stay the distance.

The British got to Allanmyo and never slowed down. They wound up at Magwe, less than fifty miles south of Burma's big oil fields at Yenangyaung, from whence came all Allied gasoline and petroleum supplies for the campaign. This rather amazing retreat, so fast that the Japanese were unable to maintain contact, exposed the Chinese flank, thereby eliminating any possibility of a Chinese attack from Pyinmana. War correspondents who had been in Greece suddenly noted, but didn't get past censorship, the close parallel between this campaign and the one they saw there. In each campaign the British had chosen to defend the best and shortest line, and in each case had moved to the rear so rapidly that the Grecian and Chinese flanks were exposed constantly, causing automatic withdrawals whether or not the other two armies may have had any desire to fight.

Stilwell returned from the front for a conference with Alexander on April 15, 1942. He arrived at 4:30 a.m., had a couple of hours' sleep, and met with the British general. Stilwell showed little effect from constant traveling about the front and lack of sleep. At the conference, for the first time, Alexander admitted he could no longer control his troops. He said they could not hold because they were exhausted and their morale was gone. It is doubtful whether the greatest genius of military history could have done better. It was an impossible situation.

This was a far different Alexander from the one who sat down with the press for the first time on March 16 and promised an offensive campaign. He pointed out then that being road-bound was the trouble with the British

in Malaya and Burma, and that he would get them off the roads, into the jungles, and over the rice paddies, where they could meet the enemy and put an end to this business of being constantly outflanked. Unfortunately, his forces never stopped long enough to get off the roads except at night, when they slept in villages, to awaken in the morning surrounded, and each day fight their way out of the traps to continue, further demoralized, once again up the road.

In anticipation of the trouble at Yenangyaung, Stilwell obtained Chiang's consent to the diversion of another regiment of General Sun Li-jen's 38th Division to aid in the defense of the oil fields. The first regiment was garrisoning Mandalay, and the second was scheduled to board a troop train on April 14. Although bitterly disappointing, it could hardly be called a surprise when a British rail transport officer phoned from Mandalay announcing wearily that the Chinese commander refused to put his regiment on the train because he "had not received his orders." The Americans knew his orders had been delivered by hand.

This delay permitted the Japanese to trap what was left of the 1st Burma Division at Yenangyaung. The regiment finally arrived and extricated the British troops, but the Chinese retired to the north, covering the British they had saved. This incident brought an interesting and typical byplay in Public Relations. The British Broadcasting Corporation, upon receiving official word from Alexander, announced that the British had extricated themselves from the position but made no mention of the Chinese. An American communiqué, however, which had been radioed to Chungking, was broadcast from London under a Chungking dateline, announcing that the Chinese had recaptured the oil town but made no mention of the British. This American communiqué had been suppressed in its entirety in Burma by Alexander's Public Relations people, but the Americans radioed it to Chungking for release as a matter of course and according to custom. BBC and its satellite, All India Radio, presented the only radio voice to the natives of India and Burma. The two announcements, by their handling, made it appear that the British had saved their own necks at Yenangyaung, with the Chinese coming in later. Face was saved presumably.

If Stilwell had a mobile reserve worthy of the name it was behind his Fifth Army. This reserve should have been retained to handle any unforeseen catastrophe on the Sixth Army front, or used offensively on the Fifth Army front. With the disintegration of the British sector, the Chinese were automatically forced to withdraw farther and farther north, so nothing could be accomplished offensively, unless some stability could be brought into the British picture.

The situation had become so desperate that Stilwell and Lo, his Chinese commander, with the Generalissimo's consent, switched two divisions to aid the British. This left the Fifth Army area dangerously weakened and with practically nothing in reserve to lend any possible aid to the Sixth Army. Adding to the general difficulties was the complete lack of worthwhile Allied intelligence. There was not a single Allied airplane available for reconnaissance on the British front, and the AVG could muster only one fighter per day to make a quick swoop over the Chinese-American sector. Over and over again Stilwell remarked that he was fighting blind, while the Japanese, with the use of excellent fifth-column and reconnaissance aircraft, knew his every move. Chennault authorized the AVG to start a few individual reconnaissance flights over Japanese territory about this time, but fighter planes, because of excessive speed and lack of cameras, are not suited for such work, and the fliers, great Jap-killers though they were, were far from trained observers.

With the military world tumbling down in chaos around his head, Stilwell suddenly found himself faced with purely American political military problems. Major General Louis Brereton had arrived in India with the remnants of the bomber command left in Java, and a bomber or two from the Philippines, to activate the 10th United States Army Air Force. Stilwell understood that this air force would be placed under his command in Burma to counteract partially at least Japanese bombing and act as a spur to flagging Allied morale. The RAF had scuttled back to India and only a residue of the AVG P-40s remained. Brereton, however, had established himself in the comparatively lush New Delhi Imperial Hotel surroundings, and interpreted his orders as placing him directly under Wavell for operations.

The interpretation of orders by senior commanders, as often demonstrated later, is subject to all the latitude contained in expediency, caprice, and conflicting personal and national aims and aspirations. It is doubtful if over the months and years that followed any directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff ever received exactly the same interpretation from the different groups supposed to work in harmony against the common enemy.

Brereton's attitude indicated that he considered himself under Wavell, on the same level with Stilwell. In other words, Stilwell was in command of United States ground forces, while Brereton commanded the air forces, with both under Wavell. Staff members at Stilwell's Maymyo headquarters advised The Boss to ask the War Department to relieve him unless this situation was clarified. Stilwell thanked his advisers, but said he was a little too busy at the moment to get involved in this kind of politics.

At about that time a radio had arrived from the War Department asking the general what his plans were for establishing a headquarters and control of the American forces in China-Burma-India. It is probably correct that Stilwell didn't have any plans inasmuch as he was, and had been for some time, pretty thoroughly occupied trying to save something out of the wreckage in Burma. However, he dispatched a brigadier general to Delhi to establish a headquarters for him, in conjunction with the headquarters already established in Chungking. By this time Stilwell realized that the land link to China was gone and he must now concentrate on holding as much of North Burma as possible, in order to preserve the air bases necessary to establish the air freight line to China—later the famous Air Transport Command operation over "The Hump." The administrative details of establishing a Theater Command must have seemed pretty remote and unrealistic to Stilwell at that time.

Concurrently, he directed Brereton to bomb targets in Burma in support of Chinese troops. The psychological effect of an American bombing force over Burma would have far exceeded its tactical value. British Tommies were talking about Britain's new secret weapon, "The Invisible Air Force," and the Chinese were justifying inactivity on the ground that they had no air support. The sound of an airplane engine would cause any Ally to dive in a hole without looking up, because it couldn't be anything but Japanese.

With the exception of the AVG, the Allied Air Force had flown without distinction in the first Burma campaign. The RAF, flying obsolete Blenheim Bombers and ancient Brewster Buffaloes, contributed little to the United Nations' cause, and finally got out of Burma altogether after the Japanese caught a large percentage of their ships on the field at Magwe. AVG planes were caught at the same time because there was no warning system against bombing raids, but what followed illustrated a fundamental difference between the British and the Americans.

The British abandoned all their damaged planes while these American mercenaries returned, and, by patching and cannibalizing, managed to get a fair proportion of their antiquated P-40s back to Loiwing and Myitkyina, ready for another action.

Brereton declared that he was unable to bomb Burma targets because there were no fields in Burma capable of handling his Fortresses. Left unexplained was why he could not have bombed Burma objectives from India fields, when, at Wavell's request, he later personally led a small force in an attack on the Andaman Islands, far out in the Bay of Bengal. The Japanese had taken and consolidated the Andamans. There was no tactical advantage in the bombing and it was symptomatic of the lack of coordinated planning and policy of the day. Brereton, incidentally, awarded himself and all his fliers decorations for what was in effect a routine bombing mission of no consequence.

On Brereton's side of the picture it should be stated that he had only a handful of planes badly in need of maintenance, and maintenance facilities were either inadequate or non-existent. In addition to these 10th Air Force bombers there was another handful of C-47 transports which, added to the few AVG P-40s, comprised the entire American air force. It was about this time that Dorman-Smith had a stroke of sheer genius.

The bumbling colonial governor had segregated black and white refugees. The whites were either evacuated to India early, aboard ship, or were flown out on Indian Airways or China National Aviation Corporation planes. The natives were sent out on what became known as the "black trails," which will always be the most shameful legacy in the infamous heritage left by the government of Burma. An estimated 400,000 black refugees tried to escape

by these trails, which led over the saw-toothed ridges and malarial jungles separating Burma from India. The route was inadequately and carelessly stocked with rice, always in abundance in Burma. These forlorn fugitives died by the tens of thousands from starvation and disease.

With a perfectly straight face, and, in general, knowing the status of American aircraft, Smith approached Stilwell's Maymyo staff with a request that the Americans undertake to fly from 60,000 to 100,000 Indians to India. Reality, thy name was lunacy.

As Stilwell moved among his Chinese combat troops, exposing himself to artillery and small-arms fire constantly in an effort to show his Chinese he was with them bodily as well as in spirit, he was faced with another administrative problem. It was the AVG. In consultation with the War Department it had been decided to incorporate these slap-happy, courageous, and extremely effective American mercenaries into the United States Army Air Force. The plan was to use them as a nucleus for the 23d Pursuit Group to be activated in Kunming on July 4.

It hardly could have been surprising that this group, composed of former army, navy, and marine corps fliers, would be reluctant to enter the regular air forces. The mere fact that they had resigned their commissions was evidence enough that essentially they were nonconformist to regular service folk ways. They had come to China to serve under Chennault, one of the great personal leaders of the war, who had himself elected to take a medical retirement rather than remain with the regulars. But on April 9 he had been recalled to active duty and commissioned as a colonel.

Chennault's executive officer created a stir when he arrived in Maymyo, accompanied by his full-blown and exotic wife, to see Stilwell. Harvey Greenlaw made no bones about the fact that not more than 5 percent of the AVG would come into the 10th Air Force. Their contract with the Chinese Government was expiring in July and, with American policy what it was, there was no remaining possibility of having it renewed. This left three alternatives:

(1) To come into the 10th Air Force.

(2) Return to the United States for assignment to their old or new outfits.

(3) Sign contracts to fly C-47s for CNAC.

Greenlaw made it very plain that the AVG felt it would be absorbed by, and subordinated to, the inexperienced regulars, even though Chennault were made a brigadier general and given the group command, as was being prophesied. In addition, the pilots, who had been adroitly shooting the superior Zeros out of the sky, found it hard to understand what they had already seen in the 10th. What they saw was the usual disorganization of a new unit without adequate matériel or personnel, in addition to a critical philosophy, which seemed to revolve around lack of promotions and decorations rather than lack of combat.

But it appeared that Chennault was trying to keep his fliers and ground crewmen for the 23d Pursuit Group, despite their defections, because he radioed Stilwell on April 21, 1942, asking him to issue an official memorandum to civilian air lines in the theater, requesting them not to hire any AVG personnel. It began to look as though the AVG, which wrote the one bright combat page in the Allied Burma campaign, soon would become just the good part of a generally shoddy legend. The gang which flew wildly and caroused pyrotechnically at Ran- goon while the RAF cruised around giving top cover would soon be gone forever. If they left, however, nobody could take from them the glory of being the only element of the Allies that had ever met and defeated the enemy in combat. They were a offbeat and wonderful bunch.

Stilwell, however, was a soldier. He was a selfless one, and could not understand selfishness in others. Questions of choice or preference were things he could not comprehend. The AVG pilots, he knew, were needed worse in CBI than any place on the globe. He knew it would be months before he could get replacements, none of whom would have that irreplaceable experience. He was bitterly disappointed in the response of the AVG.

Stilwell did not let all these distractions take him away from his primary mission of trying to hold the Chinese together in something resembling a cohesive fighting force, and doing what he could to rescue the British in

their sector. If he started becoming bitter toward the 10th Air Force, the AVG, Chennault, and others at this time, the fact might be assessed from the standpoint that it is difficult to be philosophical about human frailties during periods of disaster.

Suddenly disaster was dumped squarely in Stilwell's lap. The quiet Sixth Army front abruptly came to life. The Japanese, according to the Allies' previously inaccurate intelligence reports, had been building up their Salween front south of the Shan States with reinforcements from Thailand. This force, little if any more than a reinforced regiment, suddenly struck at the Sixth Army.

The Sixth was composed of three weak divisions of about 6,000 men each. The divisions were poorly equipped and, as it turned out, disastrously led. The Army was responsible for a front roughly 200 miles long by air. The 55th Division, commanded by General Chen, met the brunt of the attack, which was spearheaded by about a battalion. Colonel Frederick McCabe, Stilwell's liaison officer with the Sixth Army, had inspected Chen's defensive position the day before and had been shocked at what he saw. Chen had his division deployed in depth along the road, and constricted to such a small front it could have been enveloped by a platoon. Machine guns were set up in the brush with no fields of fire. Trucks and troops jammed along the narrow road were about as combat effective as the Junior League.

McCabe recommended to Chen that the division be moved back into neighboring hills, where adequate defensive positions could be established, dominating the road to Loikaw, but the suggestions were never followed. As previous foreign military missions to China had discovered, the acceptance of advice from a foreigner causes a Chinese to lose face. Chen's command post was thirty miles behind his front line, and, when last seen, the Chinese general was fifteen miles behind that. The 55th vanished. It just disappeared. As Stilwell remarked:

"It's the God-damnedest thing I ever saw. Last night I had a division, and today there isn't any."

The division merely broke up into groups of twos and threes and headed north in the general direction of home.

Where the situation had been grave before it was now desperate. Stilwell obtained approval from Alexander to take the 200th Division away from the British and move it east, in an effort to intercept the Japanese hightailing for Lashio. This was delayed for one critically fatal day when General Yu Fei-peng, China's Director of Transportation, and General Tu would not release more than about twenty trucks to make the move. Yu had over 700 trucks in Lashio busily hauling China defense supplies back to China and his own loot back to his personal godowns. Tu was just hauling loot with his own 200 trucks. The 200th was a day too late.

Stilwell, who never ceased going forward from his Pyawbwe headquarters to show himself to his Chinese in the thick of whatever fighting might be about, now took General Lo Cho-ying by the collar and rushed to the Sixth Army front. He had ordered General Kan to move his two uncommitted divisions west and asked Chiang to send every possible reinforcement down the Burma Road. But Stilwell himself rushed to the front and, as reported in Jack Belden's Retreat with Stilwell, encountered then personally took command of one Chinese company under heavy Japanese fire. He directed it to stand fast at a critical point in the vicinity of Taunggyi. The company stood until reinforcements arrived, then attacked, driving the Japanese back seventeen miles to within seven miles of the town. The general then offered a reward of 50,000 rupees for the capture of the village, and the Chinese took it. But it was too late, and this, in effect, was the last dying gasp, as the Japanese were hell-bent for Lashio with no opposition. Kan said he had failed because the British supply system broke down and his troops were hungry. That was a lie. Tons of his hoarded rice were captured by the Japanese.

This break through ended any semblance of planned resistance in Burma. By outflanking the Allies on the east, the Japanese were in a position to cut off their China avenue of retreat and to outflank the India escape routes. It was the end, and from then on it was a matter of organizing the retreat to get as many troops as possible to India and China before the Japanese reached Lashio and drove west, cutting the avenues to safety.

There was no question remaining of turning defeat into victory or even achieving a temporary stalemate in the northern jungles. The question of the

hour was how do we get out? The command was unified at last. It was unified in fear. It was a psychological unification based on survival. But even this community of interest succumbed in the end to a psychology of every group for itself, and to hell with those who staggered by the wayside.

CHAPTER THREE

The Flight

IT IS EASY in retrospect to pick out what was wrong with the 1942 Burma campaign. It should have been easy to see it at the time, but politics, personalities, tradition, ancient hates, and misunderstandings clouded the issue until the Allies, in their fumbling and frustration, became equal partners with the enemy in engineering their own defeat. For what they may be worth today there were ten main causes for the Allied rout in Burma:

1. Initial lack of appreciation of Japanese capabilities.

2. Insufficient garrisoning of Burma with generally inferior troops.

3. Lack of modern aircraft.

4. Improper training methods based on line rather than all-round defense.

5. Lack of cooperation from the civil government, which seriously hampered military operations.

6. Unsuitability of arms, equipment, and motor transportation to mountain and jungle warfare.

7. Lack of proper demolition plans and poor execution of such plans as were devised.

8. Paralysis of essential military utilities by the wholesale desertion of Burmese and Indian labor.

9. Lack of aggressive and unified command.

10. Lack of a political philosophy that could have been translated into a cause for the defenders, and an inducement to obtain the cooperation of the civilian population in the face of the slogan “Asia for the Asiatics.”

To proceed, the Allies wanted to get out of Burma. They wanted to get to India or China, and they wanted to make it alive. Only about one man wanted to come back. That was Stilwell. The remainder had had enough.

Stilwell's Maymyo headquarters was becoming badly frightened. Nobody was screaming, running through unopened doors, or suffering from hysteria. But the officers, at least most of them, were scared. They were thinking in terms of getting while the getting was good. The business of getting out or staying, in terms of what The Boss wanted to do, was getting thoroughly second billing. McCabe had returned to report the collapse of the Sixth Army, and felt the speed of the Japanese was such that headquarters might be cut off from a retreat to China at any time by the capture of Lashio. He predicted that nothing could be done to save the situation, as the Chinese were a rabble, commanded by a general who wouldn't have made "corporal in the United States Army." Kan wouldn't have, either.

At the same time the British were being routed wherever they were, and the Fifth Army, because of the unforeseen demands being made on its troops and failure to obey orders, was of doubtful value. American staff officers in Maymyo long since had begun to criticize Stilwell for continuing to be a party to this comedy of errors, so the philosophy had been one of kissing the so-called Allies goodbye long before the staff really began to lose its nerve.

There was one typical and delightfully Chinese note tossed into this unhealthy picture. General Ho, chortling with Chinese relish, announced that Dorman-Smith had offered to trade his immaculate Rolls-Royce with Ho for two jeeps. He was not only charmed that this Britisher was tacitly admitting that he was about to try to save his neck, but he was literally bubbling over with the prospect of trading two Lend-Lease jeeps for this great limousine, worth ten times the price of both. His only problem, and it was not overly serious to him, was how he could get the Rolls to China so that he could present it to the Generalissimo. To do so, he reasoned, would assure forever his political future. Ho monopolized much of the last regular Chinese-American conference on April 23 laughing and gloating about the limousine.

On the night of April 24 officers tried to contact Stilwell to suggest an immediate retirement to China. They were unable to reach Stilwell that night, but sent Sergeant Charles M. Janes to Stilwell's Kyaukse headquarters early the following morning. Kyaukse was only about sixty miles from Maymyo over a paved highway, but they did not wait for Janes to return with Stilwell's orders. Shortly after the sergeant's departure American officers were dispatched in pairs by jeep up the road to Lashio. They departed at half-hour intervals with each of the first three pairs instructed to make a reconnaissance to the east in search of Japanese troops on roads connecting the Shan States with the Lashio-Mandalay highway. Each pair was admonished solemnly to "be sure the road was safe" for those scheduled last in the order of departure.

The scheme was to move north 125 miles to Lashio, so that the Japanese could not get behind Stilwell's rear-echelon boys. The Reserve officers, while no braver than the rest, were shocked at what appeared to be outright desertion of their commander. These youngsters had been raised on the spotless tales of West Point tradition and were sure semper fidelis was just as applicable to the Regular Army as to the Marine Corps. Young regulars were disturbed equally, but practiced the West Point dictum of never criticizing one's superiors. They kept their mouths shut.

After the first three reconnaissance parties had departed, Janes returned with orders from The Boss. Stilwell directed the Maymyo headquarters split in two, sending part of the personnel up the Burma Road to China, and ordering the remainder to cross the Irrawaddy just south of Mandalay and proceed north to Shwebo, where he would join them. The majority of those who had proceeded to Lashio were on the Shwebo list. Back they went, some of them in disgust, others filled with a worried but righteous glee that they had been headed off in their plan to save their precious necks.

Members of this abortive advance party straggled back into the Maymyo headquarters from 10 p.m. until midnight. There they found those who had remained huddled in the living room of the Baptist Missionary Hostel. To paraphrase the British, they were in a state of funk. Two of them were obviously terrified and everybody was jumpy. There were certain solid citizens who were exceptional. Among them was Colonel Richard M.

Sandusky, bean-pole G-3, whose taciturnity and dry sense of humor never left him. Another was St. John, who tried to divert attention from personal anxiety by loudly worrying about how much Rangoon liquor he would be able to haul in his sedan. He didn't have much.

Stilwell's orders called for the party to cross the Ava Bridge, south of Mandalay, before daylight. He was explicit about this, so everybody took off about 2 a.m. just to make sure. Cooks and servants had been promised transportation as far as possible, plus protection and food all the way to India, if they would remain which the staff. When it came time to prepare the last meal in Maymyo, however, they had vanished, so Sandusky and one of the junior officers scrambled eggs and made toast and coffee for the worried boarders. Oddly enough everybody was delighted that the natives had fled, because they were no longer responsible for them. As it turned out the servants had been putting their families on a few British evacuation trucks to get them out. They did not expect such an early departure after Stilwell had canceled the general hegira north.

The party took off in sedans, jeeps, and a truck or two, carrying records, cooking utensils, ammunition, and some baggage. They drove rapidly down the winding mountain road from Maymyo to Mandalay, keeping a wary eye open for cables that might be stretched across the road neck-high by the Burmans to decapitate jeep drivers. All through the jungle eerie fires were burning, forever burning. Started by Burmans, they served as guides for night-flying Japanese. The narrow road was jammed with bullock carts heading north in front of the enemy and British trucks transporting what was left of Alexander's headquarters south and to Shwebo as well. Alexander had moved a few days previously, adding to the alarm of the Americans left behind. Although the Americans despised both the fighting and administrative abilities of the British, they suddenly found it very grim to be carrying the "white man's burden" alone in Maymyo. Without the British GHQ there was nobody around to whom to feel superior. There was nobody around before whom it was necessary to maintain a good front. There was only Ho, and he didn't really count, although he was handsome, courteous, and had been educated in America. He was one of those familiar Chinese generals who had wandered in and been accepted as a liaison officer, without anybody being quite sure from whence he came and

whether liaison was what he was there for. Ho promptly scooted for China with his Rolls-Royce.

Down on the Mandalay plain the Americans ran into a British convoy heading for the Ava Bridge. What British troops remained on the east side of the Irrawaddy were scuttling to the west in preparation for what would soon become an open race to India by way of Kalewa and Imphal. The British still were covering their defeat by insisting that this was a brilliantly executed delaying action to give India sufficient time to prepare her defenses. Alexander established a censorship rule, prohibiting the use of the word "withdrawal" in newspaper copy, and arbitrarily substituting the word "battle" wherever it appeared. Some American cable editors must have thought their correspondents were talking with the snakes when they got some of that copy. The payoff came when the British Ministry of Information radioed the following message to Alexander's Director of Public Relations shortly after the middle of April:

"Your stirring news items about Britain's magnificent defense of Burma have removed largely the sadness from England caused by the fall of Malaya."

These "items" must have been extra-special hot stuff or England was hitting the opium pipe to forget it all.

The British convoy was jammed along the road because truck and troop movements across the Ava Bridge had been stopped for some inexplicable reason. It was a beautiful moonlight night. The bridge was silhouetted sharply against the shining river. It was a wonderful night for bombing. Everybody sat and sweated out that crossing, although the Japanese had never bothered to bomb at night since Rangoon. It wasn't necessary. There was no opposition in the daytime.

Americans mingled with Tommies and didn't have much to say when some of the lads made rude remarks. "Where's your infantry, Yank?" they would say. "Thank Roosevelt for that Lend-Lease we never got." But they weren't bad. They were just bitter, beat-up soldiers, the instruments of those who conduct wars from the safety of capitals thousands of miles away. Like all soldiers they had a very logical philosophy. They thought that so long as

they had to muck about in this bloody war they were entitled to some weapons and ammunition to fight it with and some replacements for their exhausted and wounded. The British Tommy was a real and wondrous guy, despite his bad teeth and general lack of stature. It wasn't his fault that he lost the war in Burma. It wasn't his fault when often he ran like hell. He did what he was told to do. He grumbled and groused about it, but he did it. He never cracked, even during those horrible, searing, waterless days when he was trapped at Yenangyaung and everything was surely lost. Some deserted when abandoned by officers, but even they said that they wanted to fight again as long as it was not in the British Army. Tommy was the symbol, perhaps, of all that is good in Britain. He was vulgar and crude. He wasn't very well educated in the American sense, but he was so much more mature than the GI that there was little comparison. He was a quiet fellow with tremendous emotional reserve.

The crossing was made without enemy incident and the Americans proceeded fifty miles north along the river to Shwebo. This was nearing May 1 and all began to appreciate the terrible heat on the plains of Burma. Although early in the season, Americans were getting a preview of weather conditions that much later would cause West African Negro troops to die of heat prostration while trying to defeat the enemy in North Burma. The sun beat down on the white sands of the desert country and on the brown paddy with ferocious intensity. Although the Americans arrived at Alexander's new headquarters at the military cantonment a mile out of town by 7:30 a.m., they were already feeling the heat.

The British made a couple of their bungalows available, and the Americans set about spreading their bedding rolls on the floor or on camp cots, if they had been smart or lucky enough to bring any, and stringing the inevitable mosquito nets. Stilwell and his personal staff arrived two or three hours later, and details were organized to fetch and boil drinking water and draw rice from the British commissary. Stilwell's cooks had remained with him, and both parties had brought what canned goods had been purchased on the local market or requisitioned from the British.

Stilwell's arrival cooled everybody down. It always did. He was so completely emotionally self-contained in the face of danger that any show

of fear on the part of others was inconceivable. He and General Ts'eng, his amusing and always faithful personal Chinese liaison officer, climbed out of the back of his sedan. The Boss was wearing the old hat, symbol of Stilwell at war. He stretched and looked around at his staff. He grinned sardonically and dropped some characteristic Stilwell wisecrack which made everybody laugh, but nobody bothered either to write it down or remember it later. It was something about Alexander probably, because The Boss wanted to see him.

Nobody knew what had happened finally to the Sixth Army, nor where the Japanese were. It was known that they had reached Lashio, but everybody was uneasy that they might turn west to cut off Stilwell's party and even Alexander. It was possible, and there was no intelligence to give anything approaching an adequate picture of enemy troop movements. Despite this, the general gave no indication of his future plans and walked upstairs for a little relaxation. He needed it, as he had been doing a tremendous amount of traveling and little sleeping. In addition, he had gotten over the Ava Bridge just ahead of a heavy Japanese bombing on Mandalay, during which Major James Wilson, United States Army adviser to the Chinese on the conduct of Burma Road convoys, was killed. He was caught in an army-requisitioned service station where he was trying to fill up with gas, and was killed instantly. The British buried him some place in the rubble of what remained of Kipling's nostalgic city.

Stilwell arrived in Shwebo just in time to walk into another bombing. Six bombers gave the city and the railway station the works but did not come near the general's headquarters. While most of the party crossed the road to hide in the brush, The Boss stood outside his bungalow and watched the bombing. It was like all the others he had seen and dodged for six weeks in Burma. The planes came over at medium height, took two runs at the target to make sure, dropped their bombs, and departed just as the absurd air-raid siren announced they were in the vicinity. The general said nothing. He just watched with that expression of bitter resignation that more and more replaced his look of sardonic good humor.

St. John and another officer jumped into a sedan and drove the mile to the smoldering town. Trees and electric wires were down over the roads which

were pocked from the bombs of previous raids. No military targets had been hit, not even the railway station or yards. No soldiers had been hit, but about ten civilians had been killed. One of these was a little Indian girl who lay dead in a Moslem shrine where she and her parents had gone for safety. The small minarets and the curved dome of this miniature mosque were scarred with shrapnel but not injured otherwise. The child had been riddled and probably never knew what hit her. Her mother knelt beside the child and beat her forehead on the ground over and over again. Her moans were high-pitched and pitiful. The father sat stunned, expressionless, on his haunches. St. John and his companion looked at them and went on. There was nothing else to do.

Many more of these civilians would have been killed had it not been for the native habit of abandoning a town the minute it had been bombed. This was about the third bombing for Shwebo, and the only natives remaining seemed to be refugees from the south who were trying to make their pitiful way to India.

The British were supposed to be covering the withdrawal of the 22d Division from Meiktela, in order that the Chinese might board a troop train for Mandalay, but the so-called covering forces got ahead of the Chinese and kept right on going north.

With the wholesale desertion of railway personnel, the trains that were running were under the control of a Chinese general. Stilwell knew how imperative it was to get that train down to the 22d, since the British were not covering the withdrawal. Too much delay might result in annihilation of the division. He had heard that the general wasn't doing much of anything about the train, so he proceeded to Mandalay in search of him. This was a job that should have been delegated to a second lieutenant, but, like thousands of similar jobs, Stilwell had to do it himself, because he was the only foreigner even technically authorized to give orders to the Chinese and he could speak the language. He found the Chinese General Kan asleep in the back of an automobile, and also found that nothing had been done about the train. In terms of his authority to execute, Stilwell told the general that he would execute him if he didn't get a troop train rolling at once. Later he

recommended the execution of Kan. Both Chinese probably are telling tall tales about their Burma experiences to their grandchildren today.

Returning to Shwebo late that night, the general got a little sleep before the bombers were over again in the morning. This time they hit an ammunition dump which went off with a great roar. The press hostel and some of Alexander's staff sections were located in the immediate vicinity, but no military or press personnel was killed. One of the correspondents' bearers was wounded. The hostel received a medium amount of damage and that was enough for the Services of Public Relations. The Public Relations officers directed that all correspondents be evacuated to India at once. Two or three Americans wanted to remain with Stilwell, but that was forbidden by the British. The press departed, with the exception of Jack Belden, a friend of Stilwell's from previous China days, who just refused to go. Belden moved into Stilwell's headquarters and remained for the rest of the trek to safety. During the bombing all Americans hid in the brush but Stilwell. He sat in the bungalow resignedly playing solitaire.

Japanese bombers came over the next day, hitting the press hostel dead center, which may have demonstrated SPRO perspicacity. The bombers were accompanied by six Zeros who larked about doing acrobatics, firing their guns in the air, and, in general, giving an aerodynamic thumb of the nose to the Allied suckers on the ground. It was a very contemptuous demonstration.

Stilwell was conferring daily with Alexander and the latter's chief of staff, General Winterton. Stilwell was in sharp contrast to the others. They were immaculate in shorts, short-sleeved shirts, swagger sticks, golf socks, and oxfords. They wore their decorations and the red tabs of the General Staff Corps. In addition, they wore the red caps of general officers. They were clean and they were pressed. Stilwell, on the other hand, wore the old campaign hat, issue khakis, ancient GI high shoes, no decorations, and no insignia of rank. He was clean but rumpled. He had no orderly to look after his pressing. General Winterton was very British. He, like Alexander, affected the close-clipped mustache. Later he turned out to be a very good man.

The Boss was having lunch with the British one day, and missed the biggest round-robin discussion his staff ever held on what should be done. Almost all the staff was present at the luncheon table, presided over by Major General Franklin C. Sibert, later to command a corps in the Southwest Pacific. Sibert, a stubborn and blunt man, who pretended to be nothing but a soldier, had remained with Stilwell at his forward headquarters. Other members of this personal forward staff were Colonel George W. Sliney, a courageous artillery officer inherited from the Magruder Mission; Lieutenant Colonel Willard G. Wyman, an ambitious cavalry regular who later commanded a division as a major general; Lieutenant Colonel Frank "Pinkie" Dorn, and Captain Richard M.T. Young, Stilwell's two aides-de-camp, both of whom remained with the general throughout the campaign. Dorn later became a brigadier general and a deputy chief of staff of the CBI Theater, and Young, Hawaiian-born Chinese, remained an aide; Major Felix Nowakowski and Captain Kenneth Haymaker, Sibert's aides. Other staff officers, transferred from Maymyo, filled out the table.

The conversation got heated, but all agreed on one thing - The Boss should tell the Chinese to go to hell and get out of there while the getting was good. All but Sibert insisted that there was no reason why this should not be done. Sibert was in favor of it, but thought that the Americans were too deeply committed to the Chinese to pull out. Sitting in broken chairs around a bare, scarred table, the officers argued it out. The terrible heat was broken somewhat by the breeze of a tattered parka pulled back and forth over the table by one of the few servants. Lunch was boiled rice. All canned goods were being hoarded against the unpredictable future. Sibert favored abandoning the Chinese but felt it was politically impossible. Dorn and Wyman led the opposition on the grounds that the Chinese had refused to obey orders and had broken all agreements between themselves and Stilwell. "We have no further obligation," they said. The consensus called for the return of the entire party to the United States for redeployment to the Pacific where, based on Australia, Americans could fight their way to Japan.

A question of training and equipping 100,000 Chinese to wage a new land offensive down the Salween from Yunnan took a bad drubbing. Dorn was the only hopeful one. He said it might be done if Americans had absolute

control and if the force to be trained contained no officers above battalion commanders. He also stipulated that the power to promote and demote officers must remain in the hands of Americans. It was just like the British, except the British never talked about the possibilities of training and equipping a Chinese Army. That was the last thing they wanted. It also differed from the British in that the Americans agreed that a land offensive to recapture Burma was impractical because the Chinese and the British were unreliable. The officers enjoyed taking Tu apart and discussing the possible disposition of the last 45,000 rupees he had received to pay his troops. The troops, of course, failed to get any.

While Alexander and Stilwell sat around debating what was a foregone conclusion the Singu Ferry, twenty-five miles east of Shwebo on the Irrawaddy, was packed with refugees. Fourteen thousand of them were congregated on the banks at one time, having been stopped from moving on toward India by civil government officials. The little ferry town had been burned to the ground by the Burmans in order that the hated Indians couldn't have the meager comforts of the few riverside shacks. Wells had been polluted. Many of the river steamers and barges had been sunk or damaged by the Japanese Air Corps. Small supplies of rice had been exhausted on the escape trails from Shwebo, so the Indian refugees were not permitted to proceed. Despite the lunacy of it, government officials still were promising the 14,000 they would be taken by steamer to Myitkyina and flown to India in American aircraft. The British were well aware that there were no American aircraft, but it was a neat way of cutting Uncle Sam in on the blame for the deaths of thousands of refugees. The officials admitted privately that they could move only 5,000 of the 14,000 by boat. What might happen to the rest was up to God and the Japanese.

Nobody will ever know how many thousands died on those precipitous, jungle-covered, malarial trails leading from Burma to India. That they died by tens of thousands trying to escape from Singu and other concentration points is nothing but understatement. One special Indian among those thousands did fly to India aboard a United States Army transport. He was Peter, an Indian Christian, who had been one of the servants at Stilwell's Maymyo headquarters. He had taken his family to British refugee trucks, returned to the headquarters, and found the Americans gone. He had then

started to walk out alone and reached the Singu Ferry. Seeing one of the Americans mingling in the crowd, he begged to be returned to the protection of the United States Army, and explained that he had never run away as charged. Although there were flat orders from St. John that these Indians would not be taken back if found, the officer was touched, and took Peter back to headquarters, smuggling him in among the rest of the servants.

“Where is your family?” the officer asked Peter.

“God will take care of them, master,” the Indian replied, “and God will take care of me, too, if you will just help a little bit.”

The officer helped a little bit, while God presumably did the rest a few days later.

During the few days in Shwebo Stilwell had sent a party of American officers up the railway to Wuntho, 126 miles away. These officers were to locate trails to India which would avoid the impenetrable North Burma pocket known as the Hukawng Valley. The idea was to lead the Chinese to India by trails farther south, so that they could cross the Chindwin River near Homalin and come out near Imphal. American officers were loaded with one-rupee notes to buy rice from natives to set up food dumps and staging areas along the line of retreat to be established. Natives wouldn’t take anything larger than a one-rupee bill. Everything that could possibly be done to get the Chinese out alive was being done by the Americans. Nothing was being done by Lo, Tu, or any of the rest. Lo and his staff had moved into Shwebo and concentrated on little except acquiring a store of personal provisions. Their total lack of interest in what happened to their countrymen was shocking to Americans new to the Chinese.

On the last night of April the break came. General Lo’s chief of staff awakened Colonel Sandusky in the middle of the night to tell him there was a train available to move the combined Lo and Stilwell staffs north to Myitkyina. Such a move would be nothing but palpable desertion of the Chinese troops, and the colonel reported that Stilwell had made no plans for such a move, even though Alexander had left for Kalewa and India. It was

further pointed out that Lo, as Stilwell's executive, was not privileged to leave until ordered to do so by the general.

The Americans awoke on a blistering hot May day to discover that Lo had commandeered an engine and seventeen cars at the point of Tommy guns and proceeded up the railway with his staff. He didn't get far, as his train collided with one southbound about twenty-five miles north in a small railway village. Sibert epitomized the American attitude when he turned to Stilwell and said: "Christ, Joe, let's go home." Stilwell was sitting on the base of his spine in a Burma veranda chair in front of his bungalow. Disgusted staff officers sat around waiting to see what would happen. The air was full of rumors about the Japanese and everybody was tense. Stilwell turned to Belden and said, "It's a great May day. I'd like to lead a Communist parade. Down with everything. Down with everybody!"

"We've got a May pole," Belden replied, "but the trouble is we're up it."

"Yeah," said Stilwell.

The Boss was waiting for the arrival of a couple of transport planes to fly him and Lo over the Sixth Army front and to evacuate part of his party to India. Noon came, and there were no planes. It wasn't generally known that the ships had been ordered, so the sound of an approaching plane meant only the approach of the enemy to most of the Americans. The sound of the engines indicated that it was multimotored and flying so low and so close that it was no good trying to escape. Everybody froze when they saw the ship bearing down directly on the headquarters bungalow. Then the white star of the USAAF shone and everyone let go of his chair arms. Captain Carl Arnold started singing "God Bless America" in an unsteady voice.

The ship was being flown by Colonel Robert L. (God Is My Co-pilot) Scott and Colonel Caleb V. Haynes, hulking multimotor pilot, who later distinguished himself by commanding Chennault's bombers and being promoted to brigadier general in command of the India Air Task Force. He had become famous once for flying medical supplies to Central America during an earthquake. The flight over General Lo's Sixth Army front was abandoned because Lo had bolted and The Boss had made up his mind to be on his way. Alexander was gone. Lo was gone. Stilwell alone remained.

There was no point in remaining. He had lost contact with his troops because of the breakdown in communications. He lacked direct radio communication with General Tu and General Kan, and the British had blown up the Ava Bridge, so he couldn't contact the Fifth Army by courier.

The Boss got out his little pocket notebook and started scribbling names. He was listing those members of his staff who were to fly out with Scott and Haynes. He kept members of his advance echelon staff with him, plus a few of the Maymyo people. The ship was loaded with officers, plus some missionaries and a few of the Indian servants, including Peter Scott and Haynes were asked to return and pick up any women who might have been overlooked in Shwebo by the British.

The ship took off and hugged the ground, hedgehopping safely to Calcutta. Those remaining watched the take off with a certain all-gone feeling in their stomachs, because they knew that this was their last chance to get out of Burma except by walking. Why had the general remained? Why had he kept other Americans with him? Why didn't he cite General Lo as cause and abandon the whole thing? There were a few obvious answers, plus some which are speculative but probably true.

In the first place the general felt that he could not abandon these Chinese until everything possible had been done to insure that their escape routes were stocked with food. Although there were no solid personal plans for escape, The Boss probably felt that he and his party stood a small chance of getting to the Myitkyina airfield to fly out after arrangements had been made to supply rice for the Chinese from Wuntho to Imphal. The general was psychologically incapable of abandoning his own troops, despite the treachery of their regularly constituted leaders. Most important of all, he probably had made up his mind to march back into Burma at the head of Chinese troops. This would be impossible if he ran. Too much face would be lost.

It was a tragic day for Joe Stilwell. He couldn't stay away from the gunpowder. Mixed with his desire to inspire his fighting troops by his own presence on the battlefield was an almost uncontrollable urge to be a company commander from time to time. He had to get down far enough to smell Japanese blood. He couldn't be philosophical about this licking and

toss it off with a “Well, we just weren’t prepared this time. We'll do better later.” The fact that the British and the Chinese had fought badly in general, and disgracefully upon occasion, was no alibi for him. He took this thing as a personal disgrace which might smear the Stilwell crest for generations to come. Undoubtedly he decided that day, May 1, on the hazy outlines of a future course, and determined to follow it if it cost him his career and even his life. Stilwell was going to defeat the Japanese Army if he had to do it with staves and bladders.

Later, Stilwell critics accused him of being unable to detach himself as a personality from his command. They said he should look upon himself as an institution, not as a personality to be here, there, and everywhere in the thick of things with personal direction. He supposedly lacked the cold detachment of one who looked at the big picture dispassionately. Possibly this was an accurate estimate of the man, and possibly it was a weakness. But, whether or not, Stilwell came back months later to destroy the legend of Japanese invincibility in jungle warfare, and pushed and drove a polyglot army of Chinese and Merrill’s Marauders through the “impossible” second Burma campaign to victory in what many military observers felt will go down in military history as one of the great tactical campaigns of World War II.

The plane had gone, and it was time for those remaining to go as well. Time was getting short. There could be no campaign of revenge if potential leaders were trapped and killed. An officer was sent to the Singu Ferry to aid Chinese troops, retreating up the east bank of the Irrawaddy, in crossing. St. John was placed in charge of an advance detachment to proceed north along the railway in the direction of Myitkyina. Williams, the medical officer, and Jack Belden were instructed to remain behind long enough to see that any evacuees still about were loaded on the expected plane. In addition, they were instructed to destroy headquarters records not being carried, and any surplus vehicles.

The St. John party took off at 2:30 p.m. and covered thirty two miles in two hours over roads which were excellent for that country. The roads were narrow and congested with British trucks moving south to Kalewa and Chinese moving north to they knew not where. It was not long before

Stilwell's party overtook the St. John detachment, and all struggled with broken-down Chinese trucks, invariably left parked in the middle of the one-lane road, and with Chinese who insisted on parking their vehicles in a like manner while they squatted in the middle of the road to eat rice. Tempers, already badly frayed, broke over these quaint Chinese approaches to the orderly movement of truck traffic. Chinese and Americans abused one another, and Americans more than once arbitrarily pushed Chinese trucks off the road.

At the end of the thirty-two miles St. John decided to camp near the little village of Kabo. This was the end of the road, and it was assumed that no good purpose would be served in starting up the bullock-cart train along the railway that late in the afternoon. St. John's party camped in the rice paddy below a ridge while Stilwell camped above.

At this point the group was composed of the Americans plus servants to do the cooking; Case, the American Baptist agricultural missionary; various Chinese and Anglo-Indian truck drivers and mechanics, who had worked for the ATG; Ts'eng and Stilwell's Chinese bodyguard, and the Seagrave medical group, which was bringing up the rear.

St. John's party camped in a rambling shack with what was left of a floor suspended on stilts about three feet over the paddy. Bedrolls were spread on the floor, and the group turned in shortly after dark. The first interruption came when Dorn reported that Kalewa presumably had been captured. Although this report later turned out to be false, it made it look as though the British might have trouble getting out and that Stilwell's party might be cut off from crossing the Chindwin River if he decided to walk to Imphal. The second interruption came when the Chinese bodyguard moved in. They insisted that they had been sent to guard St. John and his compatriots, but their idea of guarding seemed to be one of moving into the shack to sleep. There was no room, and Kenneth Chao, interpreter, was placed in the delicate position of ordering the Chinese out in the name of the Americans. The Chinese moved out but assumed positions around the shack. These guards got their revenge by noisily chasing some bullocks back and forth among them all night. There wasn't much sleep for anybody.

St. John led off at 7:15 a.m. on May 2 and got about twelve miles up the railway before the convoy was bogged down again by hitting another Chinese convoy parked in the middle of the trail and refusing to budge. Japanese reconnaissance planes came over at 9:22 a.m. and had a good look at the almost hopelessly snarled traffic below. Americans redoubled their efforts to get the traffic moving, because they knew the bombers would be along soon. They came over at 10:15 a.m., hitting Tangon, a mile or two north, just after St. John had passed through and just before Stilwell got there. It was a narrow squeak.

After eleven hours and fifteen minutes of almost continuous driving, the convoy camped for the night at a native village called Kyaikthin, fifty-three miles north of where the party had camped the night before. The heat and dust were becoming insufferable. Because of the necessity of straddling the deep ruts of the bullock-cart trail, automobile and truck tires were being cut to ribbons on sharp spurs left by trees felled to widen the track. On the way one of St. John's trucks caught fire, destroying much personal baggage, the headquarters records, and ammunition. St. John had stopped his convoy in a native village to buy water. It was dry, open teakwood jungle, full of heat and choking with dust. There were few springs, but the natives were known to boil the water they carried from brackish pools and stored in ollas, explaining the necessity of buying it. St. John waited for the truck driven by little Fu which brought up the rear of his party. Despite the fact that Fu carried the most important load he brought up the rear because he was the best mechanic and would be available to pick up any stragglers fallen by the wayside.

After a considerable wait St. John, Chao, and another American officer started back down the trail in search of Fu. A pillar of black smoke was seen rising out of the jungle coupled with what sounded like rifle fire. It was realized immediately that the truck was afire and the cases of ammunition were going off. In a few minutes Fu came into view. He was running as best he could in a pair of GI shoes three sizes too large. Fu was a tiny Chinese whose costume consisted of the shoes, a pair of underdrawers, undershirt, and an American officer's cap which hung down around his ears. He had muscular bow legs and had converted the profits from several months' employment with the Americans into a spectacular set of gold front teeth.

These teeth had replaced a perfectly good set of natural dentures, and put him in a position of envy in the community of Chinese.

Chao asked Fu what had happened. Fu was explicit. He had been attacked by the Japanese, he said. He had been driving along, minding his own business, when he heard shots close by and the ping of bullets. He knew he was being fired on, so he just opened the door of the cab and hit the trail running. He had been running ever since. He felt his escape had been providential and suggested that everybody get going north without delay.

The loss of the truck was a major tragedy to the St. John party. The destruction of the records, baggage, and ammunition was bad enough. What really mattered was the loss of some perfectly good scotch, brandy, champagne, and gin, hoarded since Rangoon days, as an antidote to snake bite in the jungle. In fact, St. John had mentioned the necessity of his party inoculating itself against future snake bite that night. “You can never tell when you'll get bitten,” he said.

On May 3, when St. John’s party arrived at the destination of Wuntho, forty-one miles had been covered between 7:15 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. Before reaching this beautiful spot the Americans had their troubles. The bullock-cart ruts had gotten deeper and deeper, until even the jeeps would hang with wheels spinning fruitlessly if they slipped in. Sedans had to be driven crazily back and forth across the ruts to straddle them, and, at the same time, avoid hitting trees growing tightly against the trail. The movement of Chinese and other escapees over the track had left it covered with about two inches of finely powdered dust which rose until it was almost impossible to see ahead. The dust seemingly hung forever in the dead calm of the jungle. Occasionally the convoy would break out of the jungle and be forced to cross the paddy. The sedans, because of being underslung, had to run at the dikes and literally bounce themselves over to keep from being suspended on high centers. One sedan lost a transmission doing this, and the jeeps were kept busy pulling them out of ruts and off dikes all day. The trucks got along all right.

Water was scarce, and there was never a noon meal. Food was so short that Stilwell held the party on half rations. Nobody suffered very much because they were riding and not walking. The rumors still came of Japanese

flanking on both sides, but everybody knew they were just rumors. That made it worse, because nobody had the slightest idea where the enemy might be.

The various echelons of the party congregated in Wuntho. Captain Paul (Casey) Jones was sent to investigate the possibility of putting the vehicles on flatcars and moving them seventy-five miles to Myitkyina by rail. Stilwell was still toying with the possibility of flying out. The St. John and Stilwell parties consolidated, while the Seagrave unit camped separately. Stilwell was camped among the tall trees surrounding a Buddhist temple. Gleaming white pagodas burst from the lush green grass of this pastoral riverside setting. Everybody waded into the small river and bathed. St. John and Williams strutted about in clean pajamas, although it was only 4 p.m. Wiliams became the most-sought-after man in the area when he produced a pint of hoarded American whisky—very old. Although they were nervous and disgusted, most of the pilgrims who had come over from the United States to show the natives how to win a war could still joke and laugh at themselves a little bit.

It wasn't long before the officers who had preceded Stilwell to establish the Chinese staging areas came in and reported the presence of an old friend. General Lo Cho-ying, they said, was in town. This came as a mild surprise, as nobody had heard anything about this wily Chinese General since the night he bolted from Shwebo in his commandeered train and piled it head-on with a southbound train twenty-five miles north.

The officers hadn't gotten very far with their rice-buying project because most of the natives had run off into the jungle.

Stilwell was studying this problem and maps showing possible escape trails, so he didn't get down to see General Lo that afternoon. He sent word that he would call on Lo at 8:30 a.m. the following day. Stilwell's radio station had been set up and he was sending what proved to be the last messages to Washington, Delhi, and Chungking.

In between sending official messages the radio operators tuned in on BBC to pick up any news. They were not disappointed. The unctuous voice of a London announcer floated through the air to announce "Alexander's

campaign has been one of the great defensive actions of the second World War." Stilwell looked at those around him in amazement and said in simple disgust: "My God! My God!"

Jones returned to say that the railway was snarled from fifteen miles north all the way to Myitkyina to such an extent that it would take literally weeks to straighten it out, even if any labor remained and the Japanese did not interfere. The radio said that the Japanese were sixty-five miles north of Lashio, so they would get to Myitkyina first, no matter how promptly the Stilwell group could get out by train. This, then, was the end of all hope of flying to India and safety. The party was stranded in North Central Burma unable to move by rail and unable to proceed farther north by truck, sedan, and jeep because of the condition of the bullock trail ahead and the certainty of Japanese interception. There was nothing left to do but try to proceed west on wheels as long as the roads lasted and then walk over uncharted and unpredictable trails. It wasn't a pleasant outlook. Uncertainty increased with the report that the Japanese were moving north up the Chindwin in river boats. This tied in with reports of the Japanese capture of Kalewa and made it look very much as though the party was trapped.

Stilwell conferred about the selection of trails with two British brigadiers, Martin and Spear, whose party was camped nearby. The British wanted the twenty-one American officers, five enlisted men, and the twenty-five people in the Seagrave unit to join forces with them. Stilwell declined because he felt that the trail they planned to use, after abandoning their transportation, was too far south and hence would be jammed with refugees. In any event, he was not making any final plans to move until after his conference with General Lo on staging areas for the Chinese troops. Future events proved Stilwell was right. The British party was caught in an ambush in which Spear was killed and others were wounded.

On May 4 Stilwell called on Lo at 7:30 a.m., an hour ahead of schedule, to forestall another rapid escape. Stilwell didn't get there early enough, however, because Lo and his staff were gone again. They had commandeered another train and headed hell-bent for Myitkyina, where they hoped to be flown out. To hell with the Chinese troops and the staging areas. With 450,000,000 Chinese kicking around in China it wouldn't be

difficult to raise another army. Let'em fend for themselves. That was Lo. He got about fifteen miles on his train.

Life to the Chinese is a commodity of small importance. The following true story is an illustration. In 1944 an American troop-carrying plane was flying a load of Chinese soldiers over the mountains. These Chinese had never flown before and were fascinated. One soldier approached the opening left by the removal of the plane's door. Oblivious to everything else, he watched the green panorama sliding past below.

Another soldier sneaked behind him, and, looking back at his companions, made pushing motions with his hands. The passengers immediately responded gleefully with similar gestures. The second Chinese then calmly pushed the first out the aperture to his death. The plane rocked with Chinese laughter.

Stilwell returned to his camp, and any pretense of buying rice for Chinese troops ended then. This was it. From now on it was everybody for himself and let the leeches take the stragglers.

The Stilwell group was in a perilous position. It was threatened by three things: the Japanese, the monsoon, and the Chinese. Chinese troops by this time were out of hand. Those ahead of and those behind Stilwell had been looting from the natives until the latter had run off into the jungle taking food stores with them. The Stilwell party lacked anything approaching sufficient food to make the trek to India, so it must depend on living off the land. To do this there must be natives around from whom to barter rice, meat, and poultry. There were few natives foolish enough to remain in the path of the Chinese. It was decided, therefore, to strike west from Wuntho, in the general direction of Homalin on the Chindwin River, and wind up in Imphal. This was considered to be the toughest trail but, for that reason, the one least used, and because the British had been keeping as many refugees as possible off it in order that it might be an exclusive escape route for those British whites still in Burma. British officials had used every persuasion to divert Stilwell to the more southern trail used by Martin and Spear.

To get from Burma to India one must cross the Chin Hills, a series of saw-toothed ridges rising to 10,000 feet elevations. These ridges run north and

south and form a great land barrier between the Chindwin and India. No attempt had ever been made to cut this barrier with a road. Native and some government-surveyed trails existed, but maps were poor to useless, and these paths cut through some of the most impenetrable jungle in the world. There were no automobile club signposts to insure the traveler that he was always on the right track. Parties were dependent entirely on native guides if they could get them. To be caught in this jungle in the monsoon, unless thoroughly prepared for it, was considered to be certain death. Precipitation varied from normal 140 inches in North Burma during the six-month monsoon season, to more than 300 inches in areas near Imphal. Rivers became floods, inundating entire countrysides during these periods, and little streams became raging torrents. Trails vanished in a sea of ooze so slippery that it became almost impossible to climb over elevations. Heat remained intense, and great leeches appeared by the millions to fasten themselves imperceptibly to the human body and grow fat with blood. Those not knowing how to remove the leeches by burning were apt to tear them off, leaving heads embedded, which caused infections developing into great, ulcerous Naga sores which eat down to the bone. Later these caused the death of untold Chinese soldiers. Shoes mildewed and fell off one's feet, and firearms rusted into desuetude.

In the gorge between each range of mountains west of the Chindwin flows a little stream. During the monsoon season those streams become rivers that maroon travelers, even if they have the fortitude to climb the precipitous mountainsides on the grease-slick mountain trails. To be caught there would mean death by slow starvation, unless discovered and fed by aircraft which, under normal conditions, do not fly during the bad weather.

Traditionally the monsoon opened on May 15, eleven days after Stilwell broke camp and vacated Wuntho, but normally the rains came much earlier than that. Nobody was sure how long it would take to reach India, because nobody knew how long they would be able to use transportation and what the condition of the trails would be after transportation had been abandoned. Everything was uncertain, but it was quite probable that Stilwell would be caught by the rains in the treacherous Chin Hills.

Adding to the uncertainty was the lack of positive information on the Japanese. It was possible that they could have taken Kalewa and moved up the Chindwin on captured river boats. This would certainly cut Stilwell off from India at Homalin if the enemy had any sense. On the other side it seemed certain that the enemy must be either in or near Myitkyina, which put them in a position to intercept a retreat north through Indaw, Hopin, Mogaung, Shingbwiyang, to Ledo in Assam. Additionally this route was much longer, through denser jungle, and over more and worse mountains. Obviously the escape route north was out of the question, which left the Homalin—Imphal route the only alternative.

With these uncertainties in mind Stilwell's party destroyed the radio station and prepared to break camp on May 4. They took off at 3:30 p.m. with the general in the lead. The first casualty came two miles out when the ration truck broke through a rickety native bridge, but by dint of sweat and brawn it was gotten out. The road got worse and worse until Case's Plymouth gave up the ghost and was abandoned. The odd and frugal missionary hated to give up his beloved sedan. It had been an old friend, but Sibert ordered it left behind. This was neither the time nor the place for sentimental mechanical attachments. Case got out with his ancient Indian boy who, despite the heat, was dressed in two suits of his master's long underwear. He was proud of that costume.

Stilwell's party had missed a turnoff in the road which brought them into a small village where elephants were being used in road construction. A Britisher told Stilwell about an unmapped and new forest service road that would carry the party in the general direction desired and be more practical than any other. The convoy turned around while the Britisher led it to the proper turnoff. Relentlessly Stilwell pushed on until eleven o'clock at night, when he ordered a short halt at a forest ranger's bungalow, deep in the heart of a great forest, in order to eat. It was bright moonlight in the jungle, and the party had been traveling through some of the best tiger and python country in Burma.

But this was no time for shooting game. This was a race against the Japanese, the monsoon, and the Chinese. If the Chinese caught up there would be no further possibility of food. That night the group ate one helping

of boiled rice in which a few sardines had been mixed. It tasted better than any dinner served in the 21 Club, but Stilwell ordered the march to proceed before it was digested. The convoy continued to move with little sleep from then until May 6, when the transportation had to be abandoned at a little village called Nanantun. Dust was deep and white. Roads were nothing but trails congested with refugees and the Stilwell party began to grow. A few British officers and other ranks had attached themselves to the party, plus one Sikh officer, a couple of British civilians, and some Anglo-Indian refugees, male and female. There never had been enough food for the original group of fifty-odd, but now the group had grown to 114.

They moved northwest through Indaw, Banmouk, and Mansi. Abandoned and terrified natives begged for food and assistance. Chinese stragglers attempted to attach themselves to the party. There were wounded suffering from infection. Everywhere there was hunger, and brown native eyes already reflected the terror of coming starvation. Food stores had to be watched closely because one stole in order to live.

An American captain, driving ahead of the convoy in search of a camp site, was stopped by a party of British officers and men. The officer in charge asked that a sick British soldier be given a ride to bullock carts ahead. “Are you with Stilwell?” he asked. “We understand the Stilwell group is running out in panic. At least that’s the rumor.” There was some truth in the rumor, and the American admitted that Stilwell was getting out. He was getting out a day behind Alexander, the American said, closing the discussion effectively.

Some of Stilwell’s officers were beginning to look bad again. He never knew it, but a few were making private plans for the disposition of transportation. These officers felt that they might reach a point where trucks and sedans would be finished but the few jeeps could proceed. The plans called for the abandonment of all but American officers and enlisted men who would take the jeeps and food and proceed. Some of the young idealists in Stilwell’s party overheard one of these conversations and got a pretty bad shock. The Seagrave nurses were included in those to be abandoned. “They can live in the jungle.” The rout had reached that stage where the worst was coming out in almost everybody.

The convoy reached Mansi on the morning of May 6, having traveled 152 miles since the afternoon of the fourth. A checkup on the road ahead indicated the period of riding was near an end. Nanantun, fourteen miles beyond, was the end of the road. Ten miles out it was necessary to cross a bridge which would take a jeep but most certainly would not take a truck. Stilwell called his motley group together and gave them their instructions. Jeeps would be used to move food to Nanantun. All personal belongings would be abandoned except those that could be carried by individuals. All transportation would be left undamaged so it could be used by refugees to move sick and wounded that far. “There will have to be better discipline on this march,” he said; “so far it has been terrible.”

As he talked he looked around and began to notice the many additions to the party. “Where did you come from?” he asked various individuals. They said they had just grabbed on. “By what authority?” he asked angrily. "None,” was the reply. He asked them if they were in the habit of moving in on others’ food and transportation without a by-your-leave, made a few remarks about the British failure to look after their own, but let them remain. Had he been as hardhearted as he sounded he would have driven them off.

The refugees whose baggage had not been on the destroyed baggage truck started sorting their belongings. The Seagrave nurses worked over their white waists and colorful longyis in a group, screaming and giggling as they tried to make up their minds what to keep and what to discard. It was almost impossible for them to throw away some of their more colorful clothing and little keepsakes they had picked up here and there. Unknown to Seagrave, they decided to throw away their shoes. By some quirk of logic they assumed that this would lighten their load, permitting them to keep other things.

As the men discarded clothing, extra shoes, etc., some articles were picked up by the Indians and Chinese bodyguards. Several unusual costumes resulted. The canned food and rice were loaded on the jeeps, which negotiated the incredibly rough trail to Nanantun. The trail was so bad in spots that it was necessary to drop to four-wheel drive and compound low to keep speed down to the absolute minimum. All but the Seagrave unit

camped around a large bungalow, while the nurses and their masculine medical companions camped in a Buddhist pagoda at the top of a nearby hill.

Stilwell directed the mess officer to make an inventory of the food and Case to locate native porters to carry it. Case got his porters in the village, and the mess officer discovered that a large percentage of the canned food consisted of butter and jams which had been purchased on the open market in Maymyo and hoarded in the optimistic anticipation of a hard winter in Burma.

Later in the day Stilwell had some fine luck. The tinkling of bells announced the approach of a Tibetan mule caravan returning to its native land. Trade between Assam and Tibet was still being conducted over yak and mule trails as it had been for a thousand years. The appearance of these tough little mules and ponies, with their rough Tibetan drivers in coolie straw hats, was a Godsend. They were talked into turning around to help carry the Stilwell impedimenta to India.

The outfit was scheduled to start walking at 4:30 a.m. on May 7, but failed to move until an hour later because of confusion with the sixty-four porters required to carry part of the food. The mule train was all set, but the porters haggled and argued ad infinitum about the weights of their individual loads. The head man sat about calmly arbitrating each argument and blandly accepting surplus jam and butter to be used by his tribe. He was not interested particularly in the contents but wanted the cans. Part of the financial deal in hiring the porters consisted of an agreement whereby all empty cans would be turned over to the natives. A tin can was one of the most valuable items of barter in the jungle.

The trail led along the banks of the Chaunggyi River, which was little more than a large stream. Most of the time the trail was the river, so the crowd had to wade. The water ran from ankle to knee deep and shoes filled with gravel, adding to the general discomfort. Stilwell led the party behind one native selected as a guide. He carried his own Tommy gun and marched relentlessly at 105 paces to the minute, in water and out, with a five-minute rest during each hour. The heat was terrible and doubled in intensity because of the reflection from the stream. By nine-thirty some of the men

were staggering, although the Burman nurses trudged along easily despite their bare feet. Williams warned the general that he should stop during the midday heat or there would be trouble. “We've got to get out of Burma,” was all the general answered.

Colonel Henry Holcomb, frail, middle-aged engineer officer, had to fall out. He was told to get on one of the pack mules St. John was supervising at the tail of the party, and the rest moved on. Then Major Frank Merrill, later to become famous as the commander of Merrill’s Marauders with the rank of major general, collapsed from heat prostration. He was unconscious for two hours and irrational for some time thereafter. Williams thought there was every possibility he would die. The third to collapse was Lieutenant Tommy Lee, a Chinese who had been commissioned in the United States Army while he was working in the General Motors assembly plant in Rangoon.

Members of the Friends Ambulance Corps inflated two rubber mattresses obtained from American officers and towed Merrill and Lee up the river behind the group. There were no more mules. After the third collapse Stilwell was forced to call a halt. This was 11:30 a.m. They had walked for six hours. The men removed all clothing except shorts (in deference to the Seagrave nurses) and lay in the warm water of the river. Before getting into the water himself Stilwell sat cross-legged on a blanket, clad only in his shorts and his campaign hat. Worry over the physical condition of his group had him in an explosive mood. “This is a God-damned disgrace,” he said. “We will never get out of Burma if we can’t march any better than this.”

As the sun moved they carried Holcomb, Merrill, and Lee across the river where they could have shade. Merrill’s condition looked serious. The rest of the party moved over, and the general ordered tea and British ration biscuits served. With the exception of the three casualties, members of the group recovered promptly enough. As soon as it became cooler Stilwell announced that he was going to inspect the pack train, after which he would start again. He inspected the pack train and discovered that one of his American officers had a large bedroll on one of the mules. Inspection determined that it contained a heavy mattress, an overcoat, dress uniform, and other items of clothing. This was quite contrary to his orders to throw away everything except what could be carried personally.

Stilwell ordered all men to fall in in a double line. As the guilty officer approached Stilwell said: “Is this your bedroll, Captain?” The answer was, “Yes sir.” Stilwell looked tired and bitter because this was one of the younger Reserve officers, on whom he thought he could depend. “I’m sorry to hear that, Captain,” he said, “very sorry.”

Those assembled had not heard the quiet exchange between the general and the captain so they wondered what was up. Stilwell obviously was under great emotional strain standing there in front of them with one large bedroll beside him. “I have just inspected the pack train,” he said, “and discovered this bedroll. There is an overcoat in that roll. There is a mattress. That thing was on a mule which, without it, might have been used to carry Merrill. I am not going to tell you the name of this officer, who, by his selfishness, has endangered the lives of some of us. I am going to put this roll back on the mule and he can sneak out and take what he wants to carry after dark so nobody can see him.”

The general’s voice was shaking and his eyes were full of tears. In a sudden burst of rage he picked up the roll and threw it as far as he could. He turned back to the rigid men. “There will be more discipline from here on,” he said. “From now on anybody who disobeys an order will be abandoned and he can get himself out of Burma as best he can.”

In silence the party moved out. Stilwell led on at 105 paces to the minute. During the rest period Friends Ambulance men had built bamboo rafts on which they pulled Holcomb and Lee. Merrill could walk. If there had ever been a pleasant word on the journey, there was no more. From then on a bitter general drove and tongue-lashed his people to safety. The halt and the lame got no sympathy. Stilwell not only faced the disillusion of the ineptitude of his allies, but he was staggered by the selfish foibles of some of his own staff.

He walked until after 9 p.m. Wading up the river and floundering up and down the banks in inky darkness, there was no pity and no weakening in this leader’s resolve to keep moving. Morale reached its lowest ebb as the walkers stumbled and fell, cursing, over unseen roots, and tried to find the trail where, from time to time, they had to leave the course of the river.

Finally, however, he stopped in the center of a tiny clearing, ordered the preparation of some tea, and said that that would be all for the day.

There was nothing to relieve the blackness. Trees met and shielded the clearing from a moonless sky. Flashlight batteries were exhausted. There were few candles, but the five-gallon cans used for boiling water and tea had to be unpacked along with the tea, the sugar, and the canned milk. The mess officer was the same fellow who owned the bedroll. He parked the food coolies beside his kitchen and went to work. There was no firewood immediately available, so it was difficult to start a fire. The coolies were invisible in the blackness. Stilwell suddenly appeared.

“Captain,” he said, “I want to inspect the food.”

The captain took him to where the coolies had been placed, a half-dozen paces away, and not one was there. They were gone. Vanished into the jungle. Stilwell, shaking so that he seemed about to lose all coordination, turned on this hapless officer and in measured but quivering tones said: “If you lose one can of that food I'll execute you. God damn you, I’ll shoot you down on the trail.

“Dorn!” he called. Dorn appeared. “Take over the mess and keep this bird to do your dirty work.”

The coolies and the food were found on the other side of the clearing. The natives had moved to a place more suitable to their tastes. They had made no sound. Tea was prepared and consumed and all fell, fully clothed, into a sleep of utter exhaustion on the ground.

Along with all the other worries besetting the general was that of food. He knew there was not enough to get his original group out, even on half rations. Now the hitchhikers had more than doubled the number for whom he was responsible. On the last day in Wuntho he had radioed Brereton, indicating two or three possible escape trails, and asked the air corps boss to send rescue parties with provisions. There was no indication, however, that the message had been received.

Speed was becoming more and more important. There was always the monsoon and the possibility of Japanese interception, and word had been received that the Chinese Army behind him was out of food and getting out of hand completely, looting from natives, and torturing those who would not give up their rice and livestock. If those Chinese caught Stilwell in their present frame of mind, the results might be catastrophic. Along with this danger the general was hampered by the physical condition of his charges. In addition to the three casualties there was a British colonel suffering from dysentery who was so weak he could scarcely keep up on a pony that had been purchased for him. The Boss, at sixty, was the oldest member of the group, but nobody could match strides with him adequately except Williams, the diminutive, sandy-haired medical officer who was not young either. Stilwell at this point had only one purpose—to get everybody out alive if he had to whip them along with a lash.

The hegira proceeded on the eighth. Nowakowski, one of Sibert's aides, pulled a muscle in his groin and was unable to maintain the steady pace. The three victims of sunstroke were showing signs of recovery but with the exception of Merrill, were still towed on rafts by the Friends, who were doing their usual prodigious and thoroughly selfless job. Added to their charges was Than Swe, one of the Burman nurses, who was suffering from malaria. Dr. Seagrave was beginning to suffer from his recurrent malaria and his heart was not standing up too well under the grind. Grindlay's feet were in terrible condition. St. John was showing signs of wear under a magnificent multicolored beard. O'Hara, allergic to rice, could not eat without vomiting. Japanese planes flew over at high altitudes, and a few of the porters ran away, saying they wanted no part of the mechanical birds. The whites cursed them, but why should they have been loyal? What had the white men ever done for them?

On the ninth, Janes, the mess sergeant, was suffering from a bad case of athlete's foot and secondary infection. The mess officer was trying to get him as much rest as possible, but it seemed that every time Janes lay down under a tree he got caught by Dorn, who told the general that the sergeant was shirking. Explanations from the captain did no good because the captain's influence was visible by its absence, following the bedroll and food incidents. Janes took an extra piece of cheese at the lunch of tea and

cheese, and the general dressed him down and threatened to break him. Good will was gone. Fellowship was gone. It was just a case of a general dragging a lot of people to safety, whether they liked it or not, because it was his duty and his responsibility—two things he never shirked.

The general wasn't doing this because he loved mankind. He hated mankind then.

Walking through a majestic teak forest a lone bull elephant was sighted on the right of the trail. He was about 100 feet off in the jungle watching the column intently. Stilwell, his Tommy gun cocked and ready, flanked by two officers, stood guard while the procession passed by. Some thought this rather melodramatic until the file stopped at an elephant hunter's village to discover this was a rogue, which had accounted already for the lives of two or three natives.

Sibert went down with the heat on the ninth but managed to proceed under his own power after a rest. What would happen when these people left the relatively flat country and started scaling the mountains across the Chindwin? That must have been very much on the general's mind. The party got a respite that night, however, by reaching the banks of the Uyu River at Maingkaing. It was decided to send the mule train down the banks of the river to Homalin, while the bulk of the personnel would float down this large river on rafts. Natives were hired and they started raft construction the following morning.

One small raft was constructed for an advance party of a few officers, while four large rafts were built for the rest. Each of these large rafts was made in three sections out of bamboo. Double layers of bamboo were lashed together and sections were joined by thin strips cut from the bamboo itself. The Seagrave nurses built small shelters of fronds to keep off the sun. This bucolic flotilla set sail at 10:30 a.m. on May 10, 1942. Stilwell and most of the American officers embarked on the first large raft. In the second came the remorseful mess captain with most of the food, the cooks, and helpers, Tommy Lee (recovered), Janes, Fu, and others. In the third was the Seagrave team with the feminine Anglo-Indian refugees. The British and Anglo-Indian male refugees floated out on the fourth and last raft behind

Stilwell. The small raft had carried the advance party on an hour ahead of the rest.

The advance party's mission was to watch the river for signs of the enemy and to make a reconnaissance of Homalin to determine whether or not the Japanese had arrived. Homalin was the first great hurdle. If the Japanese were not there Stilwell could proceed without further peril from enemy action. All that would remain would be to outrun the Chinese, hope for the delay of the monsoon, and make sure of enough food.

Each raft was piloted by one native boatman using a long bamboo pole. The passengers lay back on the hard and uneven bamboo in perfect relaxation, thankful to be off their aching and blistered feet. Relaxation was short lived, however, as the boatmen seemed determined to hang their rafts on every submerged stump, snag, and sand bar in the river. Passengers would have to jump overboard to keep the raft sections from breaking apart as the current caught and pivoted the rafts on the obstructions. It was hot and sunny, so clothing dried rapidly, and no appreciable discomfort resulted from the baths.

The mess raft was the most interesting of the lot, as it contained thirty-two live chickens in native baskets. These chickens, and a large number of eggs, which also proved to contain chickens, had been purchased from local tribesmen the day before. Case, who was the interpreter as well as purchasing agent for the column, had gotten 440 pounds of rice from the same source and was dickering for a cow when the animal must have had a premonition and ran off into the jungle.

That night the rafts were beached and the general authorized the first full ration since the departure from Shwebo on May 1. Because of the different eating habits of his nurses, Seagrave was running a separate mess. This night the girls volunteered to cook for everybody. They went into the jungle and gathered various kinds of weeds which, with their artful cooking, became delicious vegetables to add to a dinner of chicken soup and rice mixed with chicken. All got their bellies full for the first time in ten days.

After dinner the rafts embarked again, although the boatmen strongly resisted floating at night. There were too many sand bars and stumps in this

twisting river, and the leisurely native pilots couldn't see the hurry. Stilwell peremptorily ordered the move despite objections. The voyage that night, in spite of the dire predictions, was uneventful. For a long time the rafts scarcely moved in deep water with no apparent current. The moon came out after midnight and made the black jungle a thing of shadowy, dramatic magic with the soft, silvery river silently flowing through. Enormous trees grew on either side, and the trail along the bank was highlighted occasionally by the fire of some refugee. Men took turns staying up with the boatmen to help and spell them occasionally. It was so restful that not many cared particularly about the morrow. They just wanted to rest, relax, and rub their feet.

The breakfast halt was called at 6:30 a.m. on the eleventh. Americans sat around on the riverbank grumbling about the confusion caused by the aides who were giving most of the orders. This didn't mean anything, because everybody was in a frame of mind where nothing anybody else did could possibly be right. A couple of British Tommies told American GIs that they would never fight in the British Army again because their officers had deserted them. But it was a beautiful day, and the breakfast of tea and a half ration of rice was good if insufficient.

Proceeding down the river, the rafts continued to spend a large portion of the time hung on obstacles. They were getting waterlogged, as is the case with all bamboo rafts, so they were riding lower in the water. This meant that it was impossible to keep dry, which was of relatively small importance in the heat. With the exception of those helping on the poles, everybody was asleep or relaxing when a plane appeared. It came suddenly from nowhere with the sun at its tail so it could not be identified. Everybody froze as the ship buzzed the river. There was no escape. Then the ship passed by, flashing the concentric colors of the RAF, and everybody went mad waving and cheering. It was the most wonderful sight anybody had seen since leaving Shwebo. It was hope all wrapped up in the aluminum body of an airplane flown by an RAF, despised only yesterday.

The airplane circled and came in low over a sand bar which extended from the south bank of the river. Bags started to drop from the open door and when everybody realized it was food, white men, yellow men, and black

men jumped overboard and started wading after it in breast-deep water. But there was going to be an argument about the food. Native refugees began to run down from the riverside trail. Americans fired Tommy guns over their heads and drove all but the bravest or the most starved away. This was no time for Christian charity. Every man for himself.

Stilwell was among the first to leap off his raft and wade ashore in underdrawers and campaign hat. He carried burlap bags of bully beef and biscuits from land to his raft until all had been picked up except those few bags garnered by the refugees. It looked as if there was enough food to get to India so long as everybody stayed on half rations.

That evening the rafts got caught in a combination of a heavy cross wind and whirlpools. They swung slowly around and around, completely out of control, until all piled overboard and beached them. Food was prepared, which was a difficult operation at best with Indian cooks, but was now doubly so because of the high wind and shortage of dry wood.

The cringing Indians got their full share of kicking around that night from an American or two obsessed with the idea, apparently, that they could change the habits of centuries in a few weeks by judicious American training mixed with kicks. This attitude had been characteristic of some of the Stilwell group throughout the campaign, and they were never able to adjust themselves to the slow pace of the Orient. On a previous evening Stilwell had caught one of his officers abusing the porters and dressed him down with a fiery tongue-lashing, warning that continuation of such treatment would cause these natives to abandon them. The Indian cooks were in a different position. They had no place to go except with Stilwell's column, and to desert would be to invite starvation and death.

After the wind died down the rafts were floated again and the pilgrims moved into the one bad night of the river passage. The rafts had to negotiate narrows where the river moved rapidly. Again and again they hung on stumps and bars. They were now thoroughly waterlogged and began to break up at the slightest stress. No one got much sleep that night. Things were just beginning to calm down at daybreak when all were caught in a brief but heavy tropical shower, which soaked everyone to the skin. Was this the beginning of the rains?

By eleven o'clock on the morning of May 12 Stilwill floated down on his advance party, which was sitting on the bank about six miles from Homalin. The advance party had determined that the town was free from Japanese. The mule train had reached the Chindwin below Homalin the day before. Stilwell decided to take no chances on Japanese who might be farther south, so the rafts were abandoned about three miles farther down the river and the column proceeded to Homalin on foot.

They bedded down in a Buddhist temple at ten that night, and plans were made to cross the Chindwin in the morning, if any kind of river craft could be found. Jones had been sent to locate the pack train and returned to report that the peripatetic Lo and party were down the river and would like to talk to Stilwell. "To hell with him," was all the general said.

In the morning Stilwell led his band up the wide river to where the trail cut through the bank and crossed a deep sand elbow to the water's edge. All were thankful because there were no Japanese and the weather was clear. Case stopped a moment to watch the straggling line plodding across the sand and murmured: "Modern Moses and the Red Sea." The waters failed to open for Stilwell, but miraculously several dugouts came upstream around a bend in the river just as the general reached the water. They were hailed, and the natives agreed to ferry the party to the other side.

Everything went smoothly except getting the sick British colonel's pony across. This had everybody stumped, and increased Stilwell's irritation, until Seagrave said he would get the little animal to the other side. The doctor sat in the stern of a dugout and led the beast, which promptly swam the wide river as easy as you please.

There was a general easing of tension after the river crossing. There was no further danger from Japanese interception, and the danger of being overtaken by the Chinese became remote. There was still the question of food, but the only real peril remaining was the monsoon. The shower of the morning before was considered a bad omen, but Stilwell blessed the gods of rain who had spared him the normal pre-monsoon rains. The trip down the Uyu River had cost Stilwell a day, but it had given his whole party a much-needed rest and permitted the healing of some pretty bad feet. Holcomb, Merrill, and Lee were back on their feet, with Merrill having made the most

miraculous recovery of all. Things looked bright except that climbing would now commence.

The pack train forded the river farther south and joined Stilwell at 2 p.m. The column moved out and was soon climbing almost straight up the side of the rugged Chin Hills which reach to the banks of the Chindwin. The heat was more intense than ever, and even the little nurses were showing strain.

Seagrave had been forced to buy native sandals for them all at the first village they contacted after they threw their shoes away. Since then they had been holding up considerably better than most of the men. Stilwell and Williams were holding up best, but Stilwell was losing weight so fast that one could almost see it fall off.

As the party toiled up the mountain the Sikh officer was the first to fall out. He was a flabby fellow, and the toughening of the previous walking hadn't been enough to prepare him for this. Everybody got to the top of the first ridge, with Stilwell making only one concession to the climb. He permitted ten minutes' rest per hour instead of five. They plunged down the other side and prepared to camp on the edge of a beautiful pool formed by a natural dam in a little creek. Tempers were frayed and everybody was exhausted. One officer struck several of the coolies who did not understand his directions.

Williams ordered that no water should be drunk without boiling, but the order was unenforceable. Officers and men dived into the pool and surreptitiously drank and drank. It was the first cool water anybody had drunk since leaving Maymyo.

Stilwell hit the trail at seven the next morning, marching steadily until afternoon. The heat remained and the grades seemed almost perpendicular. Rain started to fall that afternoon. Whites copied the natives, plucking leaves from banana trees for raincoats and umbrellas, but all got thoroughly drenched. In addition, the trail became so slick that the hikers would fall face down again and again. Some found a sort of crablike walk helpful, in which they literally walked sideways up the trail, digging the sides of their shoes into the mud. The column finally staggered into a village, where

camp had been planned for the night, and Stilwell was greeted by T.A. Sharp, a British civil servant stationed at Ukruhl, near Imphal. Sharp was accompanied by another Englishman and an Indian doctor. He reported that he had stocked the trail with food the rest of the way. He said there were fresh coolies and horses for the sick a day's march beyond.

The meeting with Sharp put an end to worry. Each member of the group knew he was safe. The very sick knew that if they died they would die in India which, strangely, was comforting. To people like Jack Belden it meant the end of a great story. The rest would be anticlimax. The suspense was gone. From now on it would only be a question of endurance. Would this strange, ill-assorted group of refugees be able to walk from twelve to twenty-two miles a day to the road-head?

The sun was out the next day although there had been rain during the night. It was May 15, and the march was relatively uneventful from then until May 21, when the party reached Imphal. Native chiefs met Stilwell on the trail and presented him with ceremonial rice beer which he, a teetotaler, felt obliged to drink in the interests of diplomacy. One chief presented him with a fine white goat he was supposed to eat. It was lost conveniently a day or two later. A week before it would have been eaten with the horns, hoofs, and hide used for soup. The Indian cooks still took their abuse, but the meals were still prepared—two hours late. Said Daniel, the head cook, in tears after one terrific row: "If Master does not ask 'how soon dinner ready?' dinner ready in thirty minutes. If Master always ask question it never ready for two hours."

Two days out of Imphal the monsoon started in all its miserable drenching. Stilwell led his file for one full day of cursing and sliding in the mud. One of the Anglo-Indian refugees was so sick with malaria that he couldn't sit a horse, and so had to be carried. St. John, who had failed to report his own condition, was staggering and suffering from acute malaria. Sharp joined with sick and weary members of the group in suggesting a rest at the comparatively civilized Ukruhl. He thought a rest would do everybody good and wanted to show Stilwell some of the beauty spots, but Stilwell shrugged off the suggestion. "We'll keep moving," he said. "Keep on moving." It looked bad for some of the party, but the halt and the lame

reached the road head on the edge of the Imphal plain on the night of the twentieth. They camped in the rain, and the following morning prepared to proceed in British desert ambulances.

From May 7 to May 20 Stilwell had walked his people 150 miles over terrible terrain and in unbearable heat. There was insufficient food until the last, and Stilwell had dropped from 140 to 120 pounds. When members of his group occasionally begged to rest a day to recuperate, he sneered and lashed them on and on by the sheer fury of his scorn. He was not a popular man with his people then, but they owed him their lives. Stilwell had not played the kindly old gentleman on the march. He had little sympathy, but his caustic tongue whipped ailing and laggard men into a state of competitive resentment, wherein they kept on walking in spite of themselves, just to show this “hateful man” that they could.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Interim

FASRAN CHOW, sent by Hollington Tong to put a little Chinese flavor into the daily communiqué issued by the Americans in Burma, had walked out with Stilwell. Like many Chinese he was well-meaning, harmless, but thoroughly exasperating. He was a pest in his own inimitable way, and had gotten into the general's close-cropped hair to such an extent that The Boss seemed ready to jump out of his old GI shoes every time the Chinese approached to ask a favor or some inane question.

When the group was split up at Imphal to proceed to various destinations, Chow was lumped with the Chinese bodyguard, which was to be delayed pending decision on a permanent station. He wanted to proceed at once to Calcutta alone, where he could indulge in some of the luxuries denied the Chinese during the long years of war. Stilwell was breakfasting with General Irwin, commanding the area, when Chow, complete with bland and ingratiating smile and the short ceremonial bow, broke in on the meal. Would the general send him to Calcutta on an American plane, please?

Stilwell, how, nobody knows, contained himself to the extent of telling Chow to go back to the American billet and wait. Later, Stilwell arrived and was approached by the guileless Chinese. The general turned on him in a rage and proceeded to insult him in typical Chinese manner.

"In all the years I have been dealing with the Chinese," the general gritted, "I have never seen anything so rude as your entrance into the mess of the British commander to discuss your personal problems. Do you not come from a proper family? Have you no sense of courtesy? Have you no sense of ceremony? I will not intercede in your case. It is up to Colonel Wyman."

This incident is unimportant except as an illustration of Stilwell's bitter frame of mind, of his pent-up emotions which would break the dam of restraint at the slightest provocation, of an outlook so jaundiced that he

would tongue-lash a Chinese he would have brushed off as a minor irritant three months before.

It was on this note that Stilwell stepped into a station wagon and proceeded with some of his senior officers to Manipur Junction to catch a train to Assam, from whence he could fly to New Delhi. The remainder of the Americans, with the exception of a small staff left behind to aid the Chinese in any way, followed by truck, while the Seagrave unit remained to furnish medical facilities for the 38th Division, reported close to Imphal. Stilwell preceded his main party to Dinjan, Assam, where he was met by Brereton and others, and where he made his statement to newspapermen which was called "the most honest statement of the war." His remarks have been quoted variously, but the substance is as follows:

"We got the hell kicked out of us. It was humiliating as hell. We ought to find out why it happened and return."

That blunt but factual statement put Delhi's GHQ into an uproar when correspondents tried to file it. It refuted, officially, the carefully staged British line that the campaign had been a stubborn and brilliant delaying action to permit India to prepare for invasion. The British didn't dare to kill it but did everything possible to delay its transmission and dissuade correspondents from filing the story at all. Privately, senior British officers tabbed The Boss as "a troublemaker" who should be sent back to the United States.

Feelings, therefore, were not altogether propitious when Stilwell went into conference with Wavell to discuss the future. Stilwell had made up his mind on what he intended to do. The 38th Division was coming out of Burma near Imphal, and what was left of Liao's 22d was reported to have moved to the extreme north, where it was trapped at Fort Hertz by the monsoon. Around this force Stilwell planned to build a highly mobile, well-trained task force with heavy firepower to be used to recapture North Burma as soon as possible. To do so he would need concurrence of the government of India, the Prime Minister, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and the United States Government. This was no small undertaking.

The British made no bones about the fact that they wanted no more Chinese in India. From Churchill down, they reiterated their stand that aid to the Chinese was a waste of time, as politically and militarily they were unreliable. They particularly hated and feared the Chiangs at the time because, among other things, they had been corresponding with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, number-two man in Gandhi's Congress party resistance to the British Raj. Madame Chiang had even gone to the extent of calling on Nehru in India and permitting herself to be photographed with the Nehru family. This looked like more "Asia for the Asiatics," which, of course, it was. It seems that all but 130,000,000 Americans were well aware of the Chiang anti-foreign bias, and the British, who always take the long view, could see little reason for strengthening a government that had, and would continue, to work against their interests in the Orient.

The British do not plan their foreign policy in terms of the next few years. They look ahead for generations, thereby maintaining a continuity in their policy which gives them strength. British foreign policy doesn't change, whether Churchill, Attlee, or Lady Astor is at the helm. A unified and resurgent China, with arms and some trained generals sitting across the Himajayas from India and Burma in twenty-five years or so, was a thing to make sober British imperialists squirm with anxiety. They knew they would have enough trouble keeping the two colonies in leash without having to buck the Chinese too. Then there was Hong Kong, trade concessions in China, the rule of Malaya, Singapore, and the rest.

Stilwell departed for Chungking about the first of June to confer with Chiang. "The Gimo probably will toss me out on my ear," he told his staff by way of goodbye. He added that nobody could return to the United States without authority from Williams. In other words, for medical reasons only.

Word had come from Washington that there would be no reduction in the American staff in Chungking, nor any other act which "might be interpreted by the Chinese to mean impending curtailment of American aid." This dictum was coincidental with mounting American disgust in Delhi and an unspoken but growing demand on the part of almost 100 percent of Stilwell's staff to be sent home for reassignment. Coupled with the defection of the staff was a generally unknown list of seventeen American

officers Stilwell intended to expel from his theater. These officers were to be sent home for various acts of omission and commission, in which they had demonstrated inability to meet their responsibilities. Stilwell later tore up the list, possibly because of the instructions from Washington, possibly because of a lack of confidence in what types of people might be sent as replacements, and certainly because he can forgive as well as he can hate.

Relations on lower levels were not what they might have been, either, as witness the following letter laboriously penned by a Chinese colonel and reproduced verbatim. It was in response to a bill from the British manager of a tea estate for services rendered to a regiment just escaped from Burma.

> Hig. Rest, 112 i
>
> C.E.F.
>
> July 4th 42
>
> Manager
>
> Ledo Tea Estate
>
> Subject: Adieu Words.
>
> Your letter dated 3d July and Bill No. 12/ML/1942 were received yesterday. The letter is fine reading and the bill is clear enough without error. We ought to reimburse you the sum you've showed but Im sorry I cant. As I assess the coal which was used "to fill up the holes, making roads, etc." was not so much as amounting 67.18 tons. I think at most 10 tons and at your price it cost you Rs 140. Yet I cant pay you for that number. I've another suggestion to make you for to deal with the problem—you may hire 100 coolies and let them take the coal back in one days work. At most Annas 8 per day [about 15¢] it will cost you only Rs 50 and say that there must be 1/2 ton left on the ground, in the holes and on the road, which will cost you Rs 7 your final and total cost.

Furthermore I'll tell you that you may use another method to get back those 57 Rupees through getting Rs 743 after selling the bamboo which were gathered for your estate. Rs 127 by selling boards and Rs 26 by selling string totally you can get Rs 896 through which you can get Rs 839 extra.

Besides the labour which we expend to repair your iron floor cost us Rs 1200 to repair the ground cost us Rs 750 to repair the road cost us Rs 450 altogether Rs 2850. Then your net profit will be Rs 3689 which we don't want to take back.

And last I have a few words to say to you:

(1) China and Britain are friends now. Britishers had better not treat their friends as we Chinese like that. I saw the Britishers in China, they are not treated so.

(2) You ought to know that an Army after hot fight and long withdrawal must be very careless and often do something which always causes others troubles. We who had fought three months and once saved so called First Burma Division [British] at Yenangyaung and had a long retiring are content for our behaviors. And we can say that no army in the world can do better than us, therefore:

(3) Your absolutely wrong during our garrison here to cause countless trouble meaningly. I know you've always been meaningly as:

(4) Once you took a paper bearing some bloody words, which said that two of our officers had gone into one of your house and “forced” your men to take away two water tins and they took out their pistols which was absolute nonsense. You did defame us by making such a bloody paper.

(5) You've no feeling of “Allies Spirit.” Therefore I say you've no nationalism in your mind, not to say unpatriotic. One cant live in this warlike world without some natural feeling. Therefore I do say:

(6) You are a money finder penny minded ghost; a Shylock (if you've ever read The Merchant of Venice by your Ancient Master Shakespear) and at last and to conclude—you've lost your countries face.

I'm sorry I may offend you by saying so, yet I must say so by my conscience. Adieu,

I am and always remain

your faithful friend,

SdJ. Guzen, Col Comdg 112 Regt.

This letter came from one of those despised “illiterate” Chinese.

Delhi was a dismal place that summer of 1942. Coupled with the horrible heat was the overpowering psychology of defeat and frustration. Although the Raj would never admit it officially, its showing in Malaya, Singapore, and Burma had bordered on the disgraceful; young British officers and British civilians who had not succumbed to the colonial mind realized it, and were bitterly resentful of British leadership in the Far East. They admitted freely that the India Command and the British Army in Burma had been nothing but polo-playing, tea-sipping police forces for generations, and the supreme pessimists doubted whether this force would be able to handle the *India Problem* coming to a head under Gandhi's insistence on Indian independence.

Sir Stafford Cripps had been sent to India carrying an interim proposition to Gandhi, but the meeting was doomed to failure. Gandhi called for civil disobedience throughout the land and demanded that the British quit India. He and his leaders promptly were jailed, setting off a brief, disorganized era of riots and sabotage, which upset rail communications for a time, but petered out through lack of available leadership, organization, and weapons. Jailing of the Congress leaders was considered at first to be Lord Linlithgow’s great blunder, but it turned out to be a master stroke for the Viceroy, who accurately gauged India’s inability to stage an effective revolution with her articulate leaders in prison. The *India Problem* actually

became little more than a minor irritant to military operations after two or three months, although it was later cited as an alibi for military inactivity.

British GHQ stated officially but privately that no offensive could be mounted to retake Burma because of the *India Problem* and because the India Command was incapable of defeating the Japanese in the jungle. There were only two voices with any power raised against that philosophy. One belonged to Stilwell and the other to General Charles Orde Wingate, the mystic British founder of the LRPGs (Long Range Penetration Groups), who died in a plane crash in 1944. In due course these two became the most bitterly hated men in India.

Wingate and Stilwell, although a thousand miles apart on questions of military tactics, were kindred souls otherwise. Both wanted to fight. Both smarted under the humiliation of defeats at the hands of the enemy. Both insisted that the Japanese were not supermen and could be whipped in their own jungle. Stilwell insisted on mounting an orthodox land offensive and did not believe in Wingate's theory of dropping small LRPGs deep in enemy territory to ambush, destroy supply dumps, and create consternation in the rear. He pointed out that these things could be done better and with less expense by air power. However, Stilwell was a Wingate partisan. "I'm all for Wingate," he said once. "He wants to fight, and that is a rare virtue in this theater."

These two leaders were quietly reviled by the red-tab staff officers of GHQ. They were a constant, prodding source of embarrassment to the "Do-Nothing Clan." Wingate, because he was British and not too high ranking, was subjected to delays, pointed procrastinations, and personal indignities. The campaign against the Britisher reached its peak after his death. While British official propaganda was doing everything possible to make Wingate a British hero to compensate for inactivity in Southeast Asia, officers on Lord Louis Mountbatten's staff went to the extent of starting a whispering campaign that Wingate had once been committed to a lunatic asylum.

With Stilwell they followed a line that he was a weird eccentric, amusing in his way, but a man who ignored logistics. The word "logistics" became the keystone of British opposition to Stilwell's desires, and a word The Boss could never mention without curling his lip in a sneer. Logistics made a

campaign to recapture Burma an impossibility. Allied forces could not be supplied in the jungle and had to advance based on external lines of communication, something that "just simply couldn't be done, what with the *India Problem* and all." The thrifty Japanese, meanwhile, sat cozily on interior lines of communication making it impossible for sixteen divisions in the India Command to attack the enemy's four divisions in Burma.

Before departing for Chungking Stilwell had received a grudging approval from Lord Linlithgow and Wavell on turning an Italian prisoner-of-war camp in Ramgarh, Bihar Province, over to the Chinese already coming into India. He had received no approval on bringing in more Chinese. He would have to get that on a higher level. In addition, Stilwell had no authority from Chiang to bring more Chinese to India. To train and equip a Chinese force completely it was essential to bring soldiers from China. There was no other way. In order to run a training and equipment program worthy of the name in China it was essential also to reopen land communications with the blockaded country, so that trucks, tanks, and other pieces of heavy equipment could be gotten in. Air freight could handle many things but not certain crucial items, such as those mentioned above and so essential to anything approaching a modern army.

In Chungking, Stilwell laid his plan before Chiang and Ho Ying-chin, Chinese Minister of War. In return for Stilwell's promise to furnish an India training site and the necessary instructors and equipment, Chiang promised to furnish unlimited manpower. It was now necessary to get the United States Government to prod the British into accepting the Chinese troops and furnishing the physical facilities. In order to spread the burden, the British were asked to continue paying and feeding the Chinese, and to furnish uniforms. With the exception of Bren guns and some Bren gun carriers, all arms and ammunition would be furnished from America. Americans would have exclusive control over training. The United States Government succeeded in getting Churchill to reverse himself and to permit additional Chinese in India.

During the weeks Stilwell was working out these details with Washington the morale of his Delhi staff deteriorated progressively. With the exception of a few they all wanted to go home, and in the depths of their

homesickness and disgust with everything British or Chinese they, somewhat naturally, picked Stilwell as the scapegoat for all the indignities, real and imagined, heaped upon them. All this was accentuated by inactivity.

During the weeks of dickering the Delhi staff had nothing to do but read and go to the movies. Office hours were from 9 a.m. until noon six days a week. Some officers amused themselves by sessions of self-pity, in which they groaned about sacrificing their military careers. The fact that this mission was not Stilwell's doing, but had come from the United States Government before Stilwell had ever left the United States, was beside the point. Stilwell should tell Washington the truth— that the mission was doomed to failure. Stilwell was held responsible and criticized bitterly for trying to carry out his instructions. He was charged with being personally ambitious to create for himself a bigger command. This was odd, when one considers that at the peak of his success during his 1944 campaign he once said to another officer: "How I wish they had left me with the 7th Division. All I ever wanted was to command American troops in the field."

Coincidentally with working to get his Chinese to India, Stilwell was discussing the project of building a road from India to China. Before he left Washington the War Department was aware of the necessity for such a road in case Burma fell. This was not Stilwell's personal dream, as so many believe. When he locked horns with the British over this question he was again carrying out the instructions of his government, although he could have sabotaged the project by declaring it impossible.

The British fought the construction of the Stilwell Road from the day it was first mentioned until the day it was completed. They fought it in every conceivable way, but always behind the scenes, even after they had approved it. They never dared come out into the open because of the impact a "refusal to help China" might have had on American public opinion and their future relations with the Chinese. But in the secret staff sessions of Delhi, London, and Washington, the best British brains combined to prove that this road was impossible, that it was nonsense. The British fought this road because they were afraid of the Chinese, and because its creation might threaten the great shipping monopolies that controlled all traffic

between India and Burma. “Business as usual” never went out of fashion in India. Oddly enough they were still fighting the road when Mountbatten’s press people started to maneuver the publicity so that Mountbatten could get the credit for its construction.

While trying to wrestle with these problems The Boss became distracted by administrative and political problems attendant on the enlargement of his command. Sibert had been left in charge of his Delhi headquarters and was supposed to take care of Brereton, who never stopped trying to maneuver his headquarters to an equal level with Stilwell’s. Sibert was not a politician, so the burden inevitably fell on the general in Chungking. Added to command troubles was the establishment of an SOS under Major General R.A. Wheeler. Wheelers and Brereton’s staffs immediately got themselves into a struggle, based largely on typical petty army jealousies between the service forces and the others. This was never brought under anything like control until Brereton departed for Cairo and was succeeded by Major General Clayton L. Bissell.

Stories about the 10th Air Force were getting to Chungking. Elaborate parties, mixed with certain other extracurricular activities, caused the air force to be known as the "Sexy 10th.” Stilwell, a puritan, did not believe in interfering with the personal lives of his subordinates unless their avocations interfered with the prosecution of the war. It began to appear to him that this was the case, so he started to investigate. It began rather innocuously, with an officer being directed to investigate the procedure used in hiring female secretaries. The officer responsible for the investigation, on the horns of the horrible regular army dilemma of being in the middle between two influential generals, came up with a piece of double talk that meant nothing. The inspector general was studying the case when Brereton was transferred to Cairo, at the time of the Rommel breakthrough. Brereton never returned, and one of his senior staff officers was subsequently relieved and reduced to his permanent rank.

All this is getting ahead of the story, and has been tossed in to illustrate what Stilwell had to contend with. The squabbling and dissipation among the Americans in Delhi should have been settled by Stilwell’s Delhi headquarters but they never were. So Stilwell had to be the goat in petty

bickerings and careless debauchery, about which he should never have heard, much less had to settle. It wasn't enough that he had to fight the British every step of the way in achieving his and his country's goal, he had to get involved in air force morals and become a long-range victim of the jockeying for local position being conducted by many of his subordinates, both in the SOS and the air force. The British, harassed by their *India Problem*, had nothing on Stilwell.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff meanwhile gave Stilwell a directive. Its essence named aid to China as the primary mission of American forces, and directed Stilwell to investigate the possibilities of constructing what became known as the Stilwell Road. America assumed full responsibility for the construction of the road from bases to be furnished by the British. In addition, the Combined Chiefs directed the British to construct various airfields, predominantly in the Assam area, to support an air freight line to China, and to furnish bases for American tactical aircraft to be used to protect the air line and to attack Japanese fields and installations in Burma. This was a bitter pill for the British in India, and represented their first defeat before the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The British argument had been based ostensibly on the impossibility of building the road, and offered the alternative of an amphibious operation on Rangoon, in order to avoid the road construction. The British offered the Rangoon alternative in full knowledge that resources for such an operation might not be available for years.

War Department conception of the road was pegged on an original estimate that Japan could not be defeated before 1947 or 1948. The Pacific strategy of island hopping was untested and might be unsuccessful. It was believed necessary, therefore, to have a road into China in order that:

(1) the Chinese could receive supplies, stay in the war, and pin down enemy divisions that might be used against MacArthur;

(2) so it could be used to move and supply American field forces if the movement of such troops to China ever should become necessary.

The road was the back door for getting at Japan. Everybody hoped it would be used only for the transport of supplies and equipment to the Chinese, as

War Department policy called for China and Britain to fight their own war with their own blood in Asia. The War Department was willing to furnish equipment within reason, under Lend-Lease, but was not willing to furnish combat troops except air corps.

In its original conception, the road was supposed to be a heavy-construction, two-lane highway, capable of handling continuous two-way traffic. As the Pacific timetable was speeded up and the island-hopping strategy began to work, this conception was modified to call for a one-lane highway capable of maintaining one-way traffic to China. This meant hauling truckloads of heavy equipment into the interior, leaving the equipment and trucks for the truck-starved air force and Chinese Army. This prospectus changed once more and much later. The unprecedented success in the Pacific, coupled with dawning realization that the Generalissimo would neither surrender to the Japanese nor fight them, regardless of how much equipment he received, caused the War Department to lay emphasis on using the road as a trace for pipe lines from Calcutta to Kunming, in order to keep the then constituted 14th Air Force in gasoline and petroleum products. The road itself would be incidental, and would be used for one-way traffic as before, in order to carry some heavy equipment to the Chinese Army and greater volumes of heavy equipment in to the 14th Air Force. But all this is getting ahead of the story again.

Stilwell had at last received the necessary authority to move Chinese over "The Hump" to be trained at Ramgarh. The Generalissimo had promised "unlimited" manpower, and Stilwell believed by this time that he would have to depend on these troops or nothing to open the trace for his road. He felt that the British would never move, regardless of promises, and requests to the War Department for American infantry brought consistent refusals. Stilwell started by asking for a corps, dropped to a division, and made what was probably the smallest request at the Cairo Conference in November 1943. At that time somebody asked him if he would like to have some hot-shot planners for his staff. "Hell, no," he said; "give me an equal number of doughboys with rifles."

Stilwell always visualized assisting the progress of the war in the Pacific. His modest requests for American troops were based on the following over-

all plan:

1. With or without American combat troops the trace of the road could be cleared of Japanese. However, some American combat troops would materially speed this operation and then free the well-trained, India-based Chinese divisions for use in China itself.

2. In conjunction with India-based operations to clear the road trace, some of the Chinese divisions in Yunnan would assist him by attacking southward along the old Burma Road.

3. When the India and China-based forces made a junction, he planned to use the China-based troops to guard the road and immediately move to the interior of China all available American and Chinese troops, based on India, to spearhead an attack, based on Kunming with objectives of:

1. Capturing the Canton—Hong Kong area.

2. Capturing Formosa.

Stilwell told a dumbfounded meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Cairo that if his small request for troops could be met, he would be in Canton and Hong Kong by the late fall of 1944 and in Formosa by early spring of 1945.

In contrast to the reams of paper used to present other plans, Stilwell submitted his plan modestly in substantially the above form on a half sheet of paper. His plan was backed by careful and detailed planning which considered every conceivable factor and depended for success only on full cooperation from the Chinese. Chiang, after initially approving the plan at Cairo, backed down on his promise to cooperate. This, coupled with natural British reluctance to have anybody enter Hong Kong ahead of them, killed the plan.

Had it been put into effect the course of the war in the Pacific, as then charted, might have been shortened by about a year.

The Boss hoped to start recapturing Burma in January 1943. With this in mind he gathered together his handful of C-47s and what was then known as the "Ferrying Command" flew 13,000 Chinese over The Hump from Kunming to Dinjan. This was the greatest mass troop movement by air in military history up to that time. These Chinese were flown over the worst terrain in the world at altitudes double normal service ceilings, through some of the world's worst flying weather, between second-rate fields, without a sign of direction-finding equipment. The planes flew without adequate maintenance facilities, or spare parts, and were in constant danger from Japanese interception. Yet the 13,000 were flown in record time without a casualty.

There were minor troubles during the move. On the China side there was the usual difficulty of getting Chinese officers to obey orders and be where they were supposed to be on time. On the India side there was the customary procrastination on the part of the India Command and the government of India in furnishing enough trains on time. The British promised to entrain 800 Chinese per day but handled only 400. Captain John Payne, one of the pioneers of The Hump flight and one of the great transport pilots of the war, coined what became a stock gag among American airmen at the time. Disgusted with the whole thing Payne walked into his mess one day, looked around, and said: "If at first you don't succeed, give up, because nobody in this country gives a damn anyway."

Ramgarh began to take shape. The infantry school was under McCabe, artillery under Sliney, and the SOS under Holcomb. There were various sub-schools under the two main subdivisions, and the SOS had the responsibility for supply. It had been agreed with the Generalissimo and Ho that Americans would handle training, with the Chinese generals minding their own business, which was to absorb tactics themselves and furnish the pupils for the classes. The 38th and 22d divisions were reactivated in time and filled to full Table of Organization strength. They remained under the generals who had commanded them in Burma.

General Sun Li-jen, whose troops had rescued the trapped British at Yenangyaung, headed his 38th while General Liao Yao-hsiang, who had failed to counterattack at Pyinmana, continued to command the 22d. The

two generals were a study in contrast. Sun, tall, lean, extremely handsome, was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and had taken an engineering degree at Purdue. He was deliberate, slow of speech, stuttered slightly, and considered the best trained Chinese general of them all. Liao was short, stocky, volatile, bespectacled, and homely. He was a graduate of the French military academy at St. Cyr. He had been forgiven for his showing at Pyinmana because the Americans were positive that his immediate superior, General Tu, had countermanded Stilwell's orders. Both Liao and Sun were proving cooperative and appreciative and caused no more trouble than one should expect in placing Chinese under foreign training methods.

Although the American officers mentioned above had complete control over training they had no control over anything else, and Stilwell personally was the only foreigner who could actually command the Chinese. In order to handle Chinese administration, discipline, etc., therefore, Colonel Haydon L. Boatner was established as chief of staff of Chih Hui Pu (Chinese for Chinese Expeditionary Force.) As such he was Stilwell's chief of staff, supervised such things as paying the Chinese troops, and acted as liaison between Sun, Liao, and the schools. To insure the Chinese ping got his pay, Americans paid him at the pay table once a month.

This was the start of a great experiment. Previous Russian and German military missions to China had tried to train the Chinese Army and failed. Would this one be able to succeed where others had failed? Would the Americans be able to get around a philosophy which prevented any high-ranking Chinese officer from accepting a foreign suggestion because of consequent loss of face?

Sliney's appointment as artillery commander was particularly wise, because, not only was he a fine artilleryman, he was known and honored above almost all the rest of the Americans by the Chinese who had fought in Burma. Sliney, time after time, exposed himself to enemy fire in order to see what the Chinese did and did not do in war. The Chinese called him the "American with much face and no hair." Yet Sliney had written as follows about the Chinese during the campaign:

> The more I see of this Chinese Army the more discouraged I become. The soldiers work like hell, but the lack of ability of the officers makes

> their work almost useless. This Fifth Army is supposed to be one of the best, if not the best, armies in the Chinese Army. It is hard to realize the low standard that we must be prepared to cope with.
>
> In the defense of Pyinmana planning I was not much worried because, knowing Chinese methods, I was convinced that the attack part would never come off. They are past masters at finding excuses for not doing things they don't want to do—fantastic enemy information is conjured up, units fail to arrive, or necessary reports are not received, etc.
>
> In the Chinese mind a promise to do anything is based on a continuation of present favorable conditions. A variation of such conditions nullifies the agreement and one has to start all over again. Cooperation between units is therefore difficult to get.
>
> A Chinese artillery unit should be required to demonstrate a certain degree of proficiency in firing before Lend-Lease matériel is given to it. Otherwise the matériel is almost wasted.

At about the same time Sliney wrote again. In this report he went into detail in one paragraph to demonstrate what was wrong:

> The Army Commander ordered the artillery to remain silent during the defense phase [at Pyinmana] except for two batteries, one with the 22d Division and one with the 96th Division. The Army Commander feared that if the Chinese artillery disclosed its position by firing, the enemy with its more powerful artillery units using air observation, and with bombardment aviation, would counter-battery the Chinese artillery so effectively that it would not be available in any strength to support the attack by the Chinese later. I told the artillery commander that General Sibert considered the plan for artillery support in the defense as unsound. The Army Artillery Officer stated that the Army Commander had made the decision and that there was nothing further he could do about it... .

Despite this pessimistic past things began to point toward a profitable school. Cynical American officers began to blink and admit that the Chinese were not only enthusiastic but excellent pupils. Before it was over these

officers were insisting that the Chinese were better students than Americans. At first China failed to furnish interpreters promised, so Americans were teaching by example. Chinese knack for copying was amazing. “Thank God we don’t speak Chinese and we don’t have interpreters," Sliney said. “We demonstrate and they copy. They are the greatest mimics in the world and are learning very, very fast.” On top of all this the Chinese loved to fire ammunition of whatever kind, and had a childish sense of curiosity which made them literally strip anything new to find out how it worked. This characteristic had its disadvantages. Every new jeep was turned over to the Chinese in good working order, but they weren’t satisfied. Always the carburetor came off first. This was followed by other working parts, with the whole thing being reassembled at last but never working properly again.

What was left of the 38th Division had come out at Imphal shortly after Stilwell and was in good condition. The troops crossed the Chin Hills on an easier trail south of Stilwell’s and had missed most of the rains. Always a well-disciplined division, the troops brought out all their arms in perfect condition. They were relatively free from disease and Naga sores, although gaunt from lack of food.

The remnants of the 22d, however, were caught in the Fort Hertz area, far to the north, by the monsoon. As soon as they were discovered Americans started flying food to them, but adverse weather and lack of planes made this difficult. After they had gained some strength the troops finally managed to fight their way through the monsoon floods and jungle to Ledo and the railhead. They were a sad-looking bunch when they got to Ramgarh. They suffered from malaria, dengue fever, and were covered with Naga sores. These ulcers, usually caused by infected leech bites or leech heads left under the skin, caused large areas of flesh literally to rot away. Many Chinese died from this, although their mortality was not so high as one would expect from whites in similar circumstances.

Seagrave’s hospital, moved to Ramgarh, was soon loaded with more than 1,000 Chinese patients, and for the first time trouble broke out. It was not very serious trouble and was confined generally to the Chinese habit of curiously sticking their noses into everything. There were a few cases of

Chinese soldiers refusing to obey doctors' orders, and one 38th Division officer drew a pistol on one of the Burman nurses. Grindlay and Seagrave beat him up. Then Sun took him out and shot him. That was that.

Discipline being shoddy in the 22d, its arms were ruined. The division had gotten its few trucks and artillery up as far as Maingkwan in the Hukawng Valley, where they were abandoned, but the troops brought all their small arms with them. These were so rusted and pitted that they were useless. The natives all ran away, so the Chinese died of starvation along the trail by the hundreds. One American officer, who walked in from Fort Hertz to meet them, counted within a few miles sixty bodies of Chinese starved to death.

It was on such a mixture, therefore, that Stilwell must base his hopes to reopen land communications with China. He knew he could not get American troops. He presumed that the British would not fight, and Ho Ying-chin, after delivering the 13,000 Chinese, suddenly cut off additional troops for the training program. There was never any outright refusal. The additional Chinese just never materialized until 1944.

The mixture was blending pretty well. Sliney was high in his praise of the Chinese artillerymen, and these remarks were seconded by McCabe and others who had participated in the first Burma campaign. This new philosophy came from many who had been most rancorous about the Chinese and most hopeless about the training program. As confidence in the Chinese developed, morale among the Americans improved. Improved morale came both from the astonishing Chinese adaptability and the fact that Americans at last had something to do. They had something to sink their teeth in. Paradoxically, perhaps, the lack of supplies and equipment helped produce a more healthy outlook. Shortages not only gave everybody something to gripe about that had nothing to do with either Stilwell or the Chinese, but forced them to work even harder improvising and creating substitutes. Major Eugene Laybourne, a regular army ordnance sergeant, carried the whole camp on his back for a while, as he and a couple of enlisted men did everything from making ordnance repairs to manufacturing targets for the rifle range.

Chinese mastered the use of the mortar in almost miraculous time. Former infantrymen learned to fire the vicious 75mm. pack howitzer in a week.

They were a little slower on the Browning machine gun and the Bren gun, but soon caught on. They learned to operate field telephones and radios and drove the Americans almost insane with their proclivity for getting every other Chinese on the field phones to chat delightedly back and forth. They worked from dawn until late at night, kept their weapons in immaculate condition, and required no special service teams or USO shows to keep up morale. They showed only one pronounced weakness: they were bad rifle marksmen.

These Chinese had already demonstrated their bravery. They were now showing their ability to learn. There was left then but one question. Would their political and military leaders permit them to fight after they received all their equipment and training? That was a question that remained in the back of every American mind. Would the Generalissimo permit these troops to be committed in the first place and would the generals fight them in the second? Would 4,000 years of Confucius bow to Western bellicosity?

Refusal of the Chinese Army to fight needs some explanation. It was based on politics and the Chinese Army system. After the retreat from Burma Stilwell determined to his own satisfaction that Chinese troops, deployed against the Japanese on China's so-called eastern front, were under orders not to engage the enemy under any circumstances, and, in fact, would withdraw in front of an enemy that might be 100 miles away. That was political and based on the Chiang and Ho strategy of hoarding whatever manpower and equipment were available to use against the Communists and other dissident Chinese factions after America had won the war in the Pacific. Despite China's huge population, Chiang was just as interested in fighting a cheap war as Winston Churchill.

On the other hand, the smart Chinese general never commits his troops if he can help it. There is no system of replacement and reinforcement in the Chinese Army, so the taking of casualties progressively, in the last analysis, reduces a unit to nothing. From the individual general's personal point of view his rank, stature, and income diminish accordingly. For instance: a division goes into combat and comes out with the strength of a brigade. The division commander has become a brigade commander with corresponding influence. He puts his brigade back in combat and it comes out a regiment.

He is reduced to the status of a regimental commander, and so on, to the vanishing point.

As generals go Chinese generals receive a pittance at the pay table. Hence they make their money in other ways. One is to retain their soldiers' pay. Nationalist troops were receiving their pay with some degree of regularity from Chiang, but often it was pocketed by the various generals. Under the circumstances it was important to maintain strength at the highest level possible. Another source of revenue comes from the sale of rice allocated to the soldiers. Hence the more live soldiers, the more rice to sell, making more profits. A combination of this practice and the complete lack of an organized supply system had produced a critical state of malnutrition throughout the Army. Because of the lack of transportation it was often necessary for Chinese troops to walk more than 100 miles from one point to another. In so doing many died from starvation or malnutrition along the road and many more deserted.

Desertion is so common in the Chinese Army that it is accepted as a matter of course. Under a unique system of "free and voluntary" recruiting, the average Chinese ping dons his cheap cotton uniform, after having been kidnapped from his village by a medieval press gang belonging to some neighboring general. These gangs are sent looking for able-bodied peasantry. They locate some, tie them up and, lo and behold, they are in the Army. The treatment they receive thereafter offers little inducement to adopt the Army as a career. Usually they get no pay, are fed spasmodically, and generally have no medical attention. If a soldier falls ill or is wounded he drops out and tries to get back to his village. If he makes it, he may live.

Late in 1944 a patrol of Stilwell's Chinese walked from Myitkyina to meet another patrol of Chinese, under Chinese Army administration, coming over from the Salween front. The two groups met at Tengchung and fell to exchanging stories and comparing notes. Stilwell's Chinese, proud of their weapons and uniforms, told their undernourished friends from China that fighting under the Americans was a wonderful thing. "The Americans pay us and see that we get plenty of rice. They give us fine weapons and plenty of ammunition and [amazed at their good fortune] all they ask us to do is fight."

In anticipating future combat for his Chinese, Stilwell removed as many reasons for inactivity as possible. Americans handled the pay, insuring each soldier his just reward. This meant that the Chinese general would get nothing but his own salary, regardless of the strength of his unit. At the same time the general and his troops received pay in Indian rupees—a currency which had not suffered from devaluation, hence of importance to the general's pocketbook.

By enlarging the Seagrave unit and requisitioning GI hospitals and medics, Stilwell insured medical attention for Chinese casualties. The Boss laid plans for the creation of a special American SOS to handle Chinese supply, thus assuming responsibility for food and ammunition. He also set up plans for a Chinese replacement system so that battle units could be kept up to strength. The success of this would depend entirely on the receipt of additional troops from Chiang and Ho.

Prior to the Cairo Conference Stilwell had submitted a plan to the War Department for the recapture of Burma. This called for an attack on Rangoon and down the Salween to coincide with MacArthur's projected assault on the Solomons. He suggested one American division spearhead two Indian divisions into Rangoon from the sea, that available Chinese divisions advance down the Salween gorge, and that his Ramgarh troops reinforce the British and join with the other Chinese troops after the two forces made contact. Because of the lack of shipping and the United States attitude on American combat troops in Asia, this recommendation was disapproved. After the Cairo Conference, in which he submitted a comprehensive plan for coordinated use of Chinese troops in the over-all war in the Pacific, as mentioned previously, he returned to his headquarters with only one consolation. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had directed that Allied forces in India do everything possible to relieve China, so Stilwell came up with still another plan to be put into execution in January 1943.

He asked Wavell to attack east from Imphal and across the Chindwin and sought the Gimo's permission to start his Chinese down ahead of the projected Stilwell Road, through the Hukawng Valley to Myitkyina. He pointed out that the Japanese had only four divisions in Burma, that the

British now had sixteen in India, and he had two Chinese divisions available in India. Eighteen to four!

Wavell insisted there were not in fact sixteen divisions available and that his forces were insufficient. India Command GHQ, while paying lip service to Indian troops, argued that these troops were so unreliable they could not be pitted against the Japanese without a numerical superiority of five to one. GHQ said that they could not depend on the Gimo to keep any agreement, and Chinese troops were even more unreliable than Indian. In addition, Wavell and the Viceroy insisted that it would be extremely hazardous to undertake a large operation because of the ferment in the Indian population caused by the Congress party's civil disobedience campaign.

After much negotiation, however, it was agreed that the plan be put into effect with the modification that the British would substitute a very small diversionary attack on the Arakan, down the Mayu Peninsula, with Akyab as the objective, and send Wingate into North Central Burma. The ostensible reason for the capture of Akyab was to establish fighter plane bases to support any future amphibious attack on Rangoon.

Stilwell had not taken the Ledo-Shingbwiyang—Hukawng Valley—Myitkyina combat and road assignment by choice. In all plans for coming offensives Wavell had relegated Stilwell's part to "that rat hole," as The Boss termed the area. Stilwell wanted to build a road east from Imphal along the general route he had used for his escape. Already present was a paved road from the railhead at Manipur Junction to Imphal, and the terrain from there to the Burma Road, though rugged and jungly, was like Muroc Dry Lake compared to what he knew he would have to face in the north. Stilwell was told that he could not build the road from Imphal because the Manipur Road was being reserved as a supply route for British troops. It was, of course, unthinkable to let Stilwell use the Imphal area to launch an attack from a British base garrisoned by British troops.

In getting an agreement from the Chinese and British to launch even a limited offensive in January 1943, Stilwell achieved his first success in what he called his "sleeve-pulling" tactics.

“Hell,” he said once, “I’m nothing but an errand boy. I run up to Chungking and jerk the Gimo’s sleeve. I tell him he better get ready to move down the Salween because the British are planning to move into Burma from the south. I tell him that the Chinese are going to lose a lot of face if the British do it alone. Then I fly down to India and jerk Archie’s [Wavell] sleeve. The Gimo is going to move down the Salween, I tell Archie, and you better get going too. You limeys are going to have a hell of a time with the white man’s burden if the Chinese have nerve enough to fight and you haven't.”

Wavell was in the middle. Although theoretically subject to the directives of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Americans were convinced that he, and subsequent British commanders in Southeast Asia, took their orders direct from Churchill. His orders were to sit tight and prove no offensive campaigns could be undertaken because of lack of resources and the *India Problem*. His cue was to accept the Combined Chiefs’ directives in principle, but always be unable to implement them. At the same time mounting public criticism, especially in America, and the British position in the eyes of the native populations of Asia, demanded some British show of strength. Stilwell was crowding him all the time, with off-the-record statements to newspapermen that a winter offensive was not only possible but practical, and shrewdly putting himself in the position of being the only leader in Asia who wanted to fight.

With pious resignation Vinegar Joe let it be known that his hands were tied. This, coupled with his retreat from Burma and subsequent statements, put him in the wonderful position of underdog in this intra-Allied struggle over the question of killing Japanese troops in Burma.

Stilwell may be a lot of things that don’t get top billing, but there was no officer in the United States Army at the time who could play the role of underdog as he could. He played the simple soldier, unfamiliar with all these politics, who just wanted to kill Japanese and help the Chinese. He played it from the crown of his ancient and symbolic campaign hat to his old issue shoes. He played it in his contempt for the adornment of personal decorations and a frequent elimination of insignia of rank. He played it in his homely, offhand manner, his democracy with correspondents and soldiers. He played it in his consistent refusal to have anything to do with

the social aspects of a high-ranking general's life. He played it in the austerity of his personal surroundings. He played his part to the hilt and walked the boards, stealing scenes from his British rivals, with all the finesse of a Barrymore outmaneuvering a bunch of hams.

Occasionally it was brutal as time went on, and even the most violent Anglophobes must have felt occasional pity for these Britishers who strove so hard to keep from fighting and simultaneously regain face in the Orient. Stilwell stung them and shamed them until, in the depths of their discomfiture, they branded him a fool and a military imbecile. "I'm a logistical dumbbell," Stilwell said, "but I'll make them fight some way."

So Wavell agreed to take a stab at Akyab and turn Wingate loose, while the Generalissimo agreed to let his troops enter the Hukawng. The 22d had come too late and was in too bad physical shape to be prepared. But with only four enemy divisions deployed in Burma, the 38th probably could clear whatever enemy would be on the road trace after the Japanese had been forced to meet threats on the Arakan and from Wingate.

United States forces, meanwhile, were building up slowly but steadily. By August 1942 the combined strength of air, service, and theater forces passed 8,000. This may seem pitiful in an era of total war but it was riches to the lowest priority theater in the world, a theater located, as Stilwell said, "at the end of the line."

The cold and meticulously efficient Bissell had taken over the 10th Air Force. By dint of superhuman work and an insistence on discipline, he had lifted this group out of chaos and was developing, slowly but surely, an efficient combat team destined to make a lot of highly readable military history in the Orient. In doing so Bissell became extremely unpopular with his air force, used to the informality of commands like Chennault's and Brereton's. In the first place he lacked the personal magnetism to become a beloved leader of men in the Chennault tradition. Second, he succeeded Brereton and was branded as a "Stilwell man" which to the air force meant he would be a stooge for a theater commander who was presumed to be an aeronautical boob. Hostility to Bissell was most acute in China, where Chennault commanded the China Air Task Force, a 10th Air Force subdivision. He was not loved in the India Air Task Force either, although

the IATF commander, Haynes, was considered a “Bissell man.” The China airmen felt that Bissell was discriminating against their hero, Chennault.

There was a serious side to this. Chinese officials were demanding more and more aircraft for both the China Air Task Force and the Chinese Air Force. Some planes were coming through for Chennault’s group but very, very few for the Chinese Air Force. Madame Chiang, a self-appointed sponsor for the Chinese Air Force, was led to believe that Bissell was responsible for the lack of aircraft for the Chinese. Heat was beamed at Washington and intensified until Bissell was finally relieved, to become the first American casualty of Chinese political action.

There was no love lost between Bissell and Chennault. Chennault was obsessed with the idea that the Japanese Army could be contained in China with air power alone. In addition, he insisted on an air force composed of fighters and medium bombers, with a primary strategy of destroying the Japanese Air Force in China. Chennault further wanted what Hump tonnage was available given to his air force, without regard to United States commitments for training and equipping the Chinese Army.

Stilwell was starting training schools in Yunnan, patterned somewhat after Ramgarh, but not nearly so elaborate. These schools, which trained cadres of officers and men rather than whole divisions, needed small and medium arms and ammunition capable of being flown over The Hump. Chennault and the Chinese wanted advance air bases to be used against the Japanese, while Stilwell and Bissell said “no advance airfields” until the Chinese Army was strong enough to hold them. This strategy received War Department backing.

The War Department further disagreed with Chennault in his concept of medium bombardment, and was flying heavy bombers to interior China bases to be used against Japanese shipping in the China Sea, and, finally, against the Japanese islands themselves. It was all part of American strategy to blockade the islands by air and sea power.

Chennault played along with the Chinese in their demands for more fighters and bombers for the Chinese Air Force. Experience had already shown that the Chinese would not fly their planes, so the War Department could see

little reason for wasting them on the Chinese. There weren't enough aircraft to go around during those days and the War Department was allocating the product of United States plane production only to people who would use it. Despite the fact that the War Department was responsible in the last analysis, Stilwell and Bissell got the blame for not giving the Chinese and Chennault what they wanted.

Up in China the Stilwell 30 Division Plan had started. Infantry and artillery schools were established near Kunming. To these schools came cadres of officers and men selected from Chinese divisions. These cadres were trained in the use of American arms and sent back to their outfits, presumably to carry on the training in preparation for the receipt of equipment as soon as it became available. Stilwell was not too optimistic about the ultimate success of this program. "If we had ten years to go," he said, "I would feel positive that this program would be a success. As it is, we must do the best we can in the time we have."

The plan called for equipping thirty Chinese divisions as soon as possible. The cadres would handle the training, and therein lay the first difficulty. Cadres had to cover vast distances on foot to reach the schools. It sometimes took them thirty days of marching. This meant sixty days' travel time, plus thirty days of school, a total of ninety days away from the parent outfit. In the minds of the respective Chinese generals was the picture of a certain percentage of these cadres deserting and never returning. It was not too surprising, then, when cadres by and large turned out to be carefully selected eight balls that could be spared forever.

As Christmas 1942 approached things were looking better. Up in Assam a small group of American engineers was about ready to start constructing the Stilwell Road. The British had allocated the necessary tonnages on the Assam—Bengal Railway and the Brahmaputra Barge Line to support the construction. The Japanese had moved in only as far as the mountain-peak village of Tagap, so engineers would be in no danger of enemy interference for about seventy-five miles. The 38th Division was nearly ready to move to Ledo with a scheduled kickoff of February 15, and the British 14th Division was moving to bases preparatory to the advance on Akyab.

It wasn't a dream setup by any stretch of the imagination, but it was something. Americans didn't like the Arakan thrust because it was of dubious strategic or tactical value. Americans realized, however, that the British heavily outnumbered the enemy on the peninsula and had infinitely better lines of communication. Victory seemed assured. A victory at this stage might be of great importance in overcoming the defeatist psychology of both the military and civilian population of India. In addition to the national British policy of a cheap war, there was certainly the combat deterrent fostered by a psychology that the British simply couldn't beat the Japanese, and they couldn't afford any more defeats.

The 38th was considered to be 90 percent ready, but it was presumed that the Chinese wouldn't have too heavy going. The Japanese had sent only a small holding and reconnaissance force into the northern jungles to intercept any Chinese advance and try to hold until reinforcements could arrive. In any event Stilwell had a limited objective only, as he had untried troops and only eight to ten weeks of dry season remaining.

At the same time the 10th Air Force had been built up in India to a point where it was on more than a parity with the Japanese, and had commenced to take the offensive, rather than assuming a purely defensive role. The RAF had been built up so that theoretically, at least, it should have been more than able to hold its own on the Mayu Peninsula. According to any kind of military prognostication the Allies couldn't lose this one, even though they didn't win much. The military prophets of CBI, however, not only gained no honor—they lost their shirts.

The British moved slowly and carefully to Chittagong, grouped, and prepared to advance. During January they inched their way down the coastal plain of the Mayu Peninsula, having only slight patrol action. They paid little attention to the Kalapanzin River Valley on the other side of the Mayu Mountains to their left, but they were progressing.

The Chinese had moved to Ledo in January and were deploying up the old refugee trail from Ledo to Shingbwiyang, which was to be used as the trace for the Stilwell Road. There was little reason for anything but optimism—until the British suddenly got into trouble. Before the middle of February the Japanese settled down to hold the British along the coastal plain. The

entire enemy force did not exceed a regiment, while the British had a division. The British couldn't move an inch. Casualty reports showed that Indian and British troops were being slaughtered in small engagements. American observers noted repetition of the mistakes made in Malaya and Burma. Suddenly the unpredictable Japanese in the Kalapanzin Valley crossed the Mayu Range in the British rear. The British, trapped, turned and fought their disorganized way back to Chittagong with only remnants of their original force. Despite another fifteen divisions present in India, that was the end of any British activity for the season.

There was still the 38th Division poised at Ledo, but "in the Chinese mind a promise to do anything is based on a continuation of present favorable conditions." Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, without warning, directed Stilwell to cancel his attack from Ledo.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Showdown

The year 1943 was decisive for United States aims in Asia. It started badly, with the British failure on the Arakan and the Generalissimo suddenly withdrawing his approval for a Chinese advance in North Burma. It didn't look any better when it became apparent that Wingate's forces, while slogging heroically around the jungle, were being cut to pieces and accomplishing little that couldn't have been done by the air corps at a fraction of the cost. It ended with the Stilwell Road well started, and with Stilwell tearing himself loose from British restraint to attack down the Hukawng Valley alone. It was a year in which the President, the Prime Minister, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff discussed Southeast Asia at the January Casablanca Conference, at the May Trident Conference in Washington, at the August Quadrant Conference in Quebec, and the November Cairo Conference. Generalissimo and Madame Chiang attended the last meeting.

At each session the confrères split sharply over the question of aid to China, and at each meeting the American aim of re-establishing surface communications from India to China via North Burma was triumphant. It came closest to being lost at Cairo when an American secret radio from Delhi to Stilwell, reporting critically on the Chinese in the Hukawng Valley, fell into British hands.

It was a year in which British efforts to get rid of Stilwell failed, but Stilwell was instrumental in ousting Wavell. It was a year in which Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten arrived to replace Wavell as tactical commander, and General Sir Claude Auchinleck succeeded Wavell as Commander in Chief, India. Wavell replaced Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy, and the obstructionism of General Sir George Giffard, general officer commanding the 11th Army Group, started to become the principal bone of contention. It was a year in which a small American task force, later known as Merrill's Marauders, was recruited and prepared for what was to become a hard-won campaign in 1944.

Even as British and Indian forces were preparing to go into action on the Mayu Peninsula in January, the Combined Chiefs sat down with Roosevelt and Churchill in Casablanca. This meeting was held primarily for the purpose of discussing the North African campaign and future military action against Festung Europa, but the whole question of war in the Pacific and in the Orient was discussed. Although MacArthur was still using about six Australian divisions, the United States was proceeding with a strategy in the Pacific which would place operations toward Japan exclusively in the hands of the American Navy and foot soldiers. It was of supreme importance to America that everything be done in China and Burma to contain as many troops as possible which might otherwise be used against MacArthur. This called for aid to China and an attack in Burma.

The British presented the customary argument that aid to China was a waste of time because the Army could not be made into a respectable fighting force in anything short of years, and that the Generalissimo was politically unreliable. Available Lend-Lease and resources in air and service forces could be more equitably used by the British in Southeast Asia and should, therefore, be diverted. Yet the British pleaded lack of resources, and said it was impossible to open a major Burma thrust.

Roosevelt, always sentimental in his regard for China and the Chinese, insisted that every resource that could possibly be diverted from the more important campaigns be dedicated to China. The War Department wanted China kept in the war. It realized that the possibility of any great material aid to China was slight, but was sure that an indication of desire on the part of the United States to come to China's aid would give Chiang enough psychological ammunition to be able to overrule collaborationist factions in and out of his government, which wanted to sign a separate peace with Japan.

It was well known by the War Department that China's Army had not fought a major engagement on the eastern front since Shanghai (1937), Hollington Tong's frequent pieces of military whimsy to the contrary notwithstanding. But it was presumed that complete Kuomintang capitulation would permit the withdrawal of hundreds of thousands of Japanese being used to police and govern the occupied areas. It would offer

a haven for a fugitive Japanese Government driven from the home islands. A capitulation would have meant that bases for American aircraft in China would be lost unless American troops could be flown in to hold them. There was no possibility of supplying any appreciable American force in China, and to lose the bases would mean the loss of the only ones available at the time to support later operations against the Philippines, to attack the Japanese supply line to Malaysia, and to harass enemy installations on the China coast, in Manchuria, in Formosa, and even in the Japanese islands themselves.

The War Department was sure it could obtain these benefits by a matériel contribution to the Chinese Army itself, infinitesimal by comparison with matériel being allocated to other theaters. It was realized by the Americans that what amounted to token assistance would bring public criticism from the Chinese and that it would make Stilwell's job even more difficult. But token assistance was considered better than no assistance, so, despite British objections, the Combined Chiefs reiterated its stand that surface communications be reopened with China, and stated that supplies over The Hump would be increased.

Stilwell's problem was clearly recognized by the War Department. This is documented in the following quotation from General George C. Marshall's Biennial Report covering the period July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945:

> The mission . . . given General Stilwell in Asia was one of the most difficult of the war. He was out at the end of the thinnest supply line of all; the demands of the war in Europe and the Pacific campaign, which were clearly the most vital to final victory, exceeded our resources.... General Stilwell could have only what was left and that was extremely thin.... He faced an extremely difficult political problem(s) and his purely military problem of opposing large numbers of enemy with few resources was unmatched in any theater.

The cancellation of the Chinese advance ahead of the road and the failure of the British on the Mayu Peninsula complicated the issue. Hence Wavell and Stilwell were summoned to appear before the Trident Conference in Washington for a general review of strategy in Asia. Also summoned were Chennault and Brigadier General William D. Old, who, as chief of staff,

represented Bissell's 10th Air Force. Colonel Frank Merrill, then CBI G-3, was in Stilwell's party. Wavell took his air and ground commanders and all testified before the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

The British presented a solid front testifying that the Army in India lacked the resources or the training to launch a Burma campaign, and recommended no action be taken until such time as the necessary resources could be obtained to mount amphibious operations to the south. Logistics were unreliable because of the Indians. The British stated that the construction of the Stilwell Road was impossible for various reasons. It was impossible because of the great land mass between Ledo and Shingbwiyang, because of the jungle, because of the high incidence of malaria (125 percent among the native population), because of the monsoon rains, because of the lack of any gravel in the Hukawng Valley, because the Assam—Bengal line of communications could not deliver required tonnages.

Stilwell and Old argued in behalf of construction of the road in order to move heavy equipment to China which it would be uneconomical to fly. They argued in favor of increased Hump tonnage to be allocated predominately to Stilwell's Chinese Training and Combat Command, already training Chinese cadres, and desirous of equipping divisions in Yunnan. Stilwell contemptuously tossed aside the argument that no overland offensive could be mounted to retake North Burma, and stated that an aggressive combined effort the January before would have made a deep penetration before the rains came. He pointed out the disparity in numbers of the opposing forces, claimed the Japanese were not supermen and could be beaten in the jungles by Allies willing to throw in their forces and really fight.

Where the British were united on strategy the Americans were not. Chennault presented an independent line. He did not oppose the road or a North Burma campaign, but did oppose The Hump tonnage allocation proposed by Stilwell and Old. Chennault argued for almost all the tonnage to support and expand his China Air Task Force. He insisted on the construction of advance bases, on the theory that he could use them to support operations in the Philippines and for his fighters and medium

bombers to wipe out the Japanese Air Force in China. He asked for more planes for the Chinese Air Force. He said all this would be more effective than any aid to the Chinese Army.

Stilwell and Old maintained that advance bases should not be constructed until the Chinese Army had been strengthened sufficiently to hold them against a Japanese attack. Stilwell was emphatic that the Japanese would move in and take the advance fields as soon as they became a nuisance or a Philippine invasion became imminent. He said that the Chinese were in no position to put up adequate resistance, even if they so desired, but that given proper training and some arms he was confident they would be permitted by the Gimo to put up a defense of the fields. Chennault insisted that he could hold the Japanese Army with his air force.

The Combined Chiefs ruled that top priority must be given the Air Transport Command to build up capacity until it was capable of moving 10,000 tons per month over The Hump. Nine tenths of the tonnage was allocated to Chennault by direction of President Roosevelt. At the same time Stilwell and Wavell were directed to take vigorous action to begin a Burma campaign at the end of the monsoon in October. Additional aircraft for the Chinese Air Force was disapproved. The President directed construction of Chennault's advance fields.

Behind the scenes the British maneuvered to have their old "enemy," Stilwell, recalled, and Stilwell asked that Wavell be replaced by somebody willing to fight and not bound by defeatism. Another piece of politics was getting under way which broke shortly thereafter. Under terms of War Department regulations, commanders must return efficiency reports on subordinate generals every six months. This rule is, or can be, overlooked in the confusion of war. If these reports contain no unsatisfactory entries, they are not shown to the subjects for comment. If any unsatisfactory entries are listed, the subject is required to see the report and reply by endorsement.

Bissell was about to prepare an efficiency report on his subordinate, Chennault. He intended to make one unfavorable entry, so he notified Major General Thomas G. Hearn, Stilwell's chief of staff in Chungking, that the report was due. He further stated that he intended to render the report as he saw it, and in so doing he would cite Chennault for lack of cooperation and

refusal to obey orders. Bissell then asked the chief of staff if, under the circumstances, he should render the report or forget it for the time being. Hearn told Bissell to render the report and send it “through channels” to the War Department. That report became the casus belli for Chennault and the Chinese.

Chennault, the most rugged of the rugged individualists and a nonconformist, smarted to get out from under Bissell. He played his game shrewdly by playing Bissell and Stilwell off against the Chinese. Chennault, being an old friend and business associate of T.V. Soong, a former employee of Chiang's regime and a confidant of the Madame (sister Mayling Soong), would report his failures to get them more aircraft and blame it all on Stilwell and Bissell. Stilwell at the time was politically untouchable because of his standing with both the War Department and the American public, but Bissell was not. A not too colorful general, he lacked a good press and he was not one of “Hap Arnold’s boys.”

Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Chennault got their heads together. T.V. Soong was notified in Washington to go to Roosevelt and demand Bissell’s recall on the basis of his hostility to China aid and persecution of Chennault, and to request the establishment of a separate American air force in China. T.V. was successful, and Bissell soon was recalled to become G-2 of the War Department, despite violent Stilwell opposition.

The China Air Task Force became the 14th Air Force, with Chennault in command, and General Howard C. Davidson subsequently assumed command of the 10th. In addition, Chennault was made the Generalissimo’s chief of staff for air which purportedly put him on the same level with Stilwell for air operations in China.

Upon his return from Washington, Stilwell made an inspection of his road which had been under construction since Christmas of 1942. He found the road stumbling along inefficiently under a brigadier general and abruptly directed Wheeler, the SOS commander, to relieve him forthwith. This was done, and the road construction was taken over by Colonel Lewis A. Pick, later to become a major general. Pick did a fantastic job of almost killing himself and his men to push this fabulous road over the mountains and through the jungle during dry weather and the monsoon. The Stilwell Road

was officially known as the Ledo Road at first but to the workmen it was always "Pick's Pike." Stilwell called Pick "the old man with the stick" in honor of his long hiking staff, and a close bond of mutual respect and affection developed between them.

Stilwell's return from Washington coincided with the monsoon. During this period the 38th Division was deployed in the jungle, giving outpost protection to the American road builders. Training of the 22d Division continued at Ramgarh. With the directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to bolster him, Stilwell again received approval from the Generalissimo to launch an offensive with Chinese troops into Burma in October. He also obtained, after prolonged arguments, procrastination, and negotiation, authority to move more Chinese over The Hump to Ramgarh. General Ho resisted strongly any attempts to move more Chinese to India. At the same time the British fought with equal doggedness to keep the Chinese in China. The British point of view was understandable, but the Chinese attitude was more obscure. It seemed that Ho's and the Generalissimo's opposition stemmed from two main premises:

(1) a loss of face for Ho who, as chief of staff and Minister of War, had been unable to produce anything approaching a modern army in technique as divorced from weapons. Ho might be forgiven for lack of weapons, but he could present no sound argument for a failure to train troops and leaders. The tactical development of the troops under Stilwell already was prompting questions from Chinese officers as to why Ho had been unable to do something similar.

(2) Fear that a large, well-trained, well-equipped Chinese Army might be able to hold or upset the balance of power in China's internal politics after the war.

Despite this combined opposition, Stilwell was able to move enough additional troops to India to activate another division, less one infantry regiment. This partial division, the 30th, was moved to North Burma early in 1944, where it performed indifferently against the Japanese but was of considerable assistance by being present and available to relieve tired troops of the other two divisions. The 38th and 22d, after muddling beginnings, became crack troops.

During this period emphasis on Stilwell's staff turned from Chungking to Delhi. By this time Stilwell had four separate staffs. His chief of staff presided over the group in Chungking, which had become little more than a liaison mission with the Chinese, although called the Forward Echelon of the theater staff. The so-called Rear Echelon staff, with headquarters in Delhi under Deputy Chief of Staff Brigadier General B.G. Ferris, was responsible for planning. India being the base of all projected operations, it was necessary for Stilwell to have his planning and logistical staff close to British GHQ. Tonnage allocations on the Assam—Bengal Railway and the Brahmaputra Barge Line, main support for the road, The Hump, and the North Burma operation, had to be fought for in Delhi. All items of reverse Lend-Lease had to be requisitioned in Delhi. Meanwhile Brigadier General Frank Dorn had been made a deputy chief of staff and was supervising the training schools in Yunnan and the administration of the Kunming area. As such he was a watchdog for Stilwell over Chennault, as well as responsible for the administration of the training schools. The last staff was Chih Hui Pu in Ledo under Boatner.

Although Stilwell became famous as a troop commander in the field, and as a tenacious, unrelenting general whose singleness of purpose was such that he forced two unwilling nations to contribute to the war effort, he never won any prizes as an administrator. There was a lack of coordination among his various headquarters which caused confusion and conflict. The general had a tendency to render important decisions to subordinate commanders on field trips without letting his staff in on the secret. This caused his planners to work in the dark from time to time, and to create situations where any one of his respective staffs might be working at cross-purposes to him or each other. He detested all paper work. It was time, obviously, for a strong officer to be deputy theater commander to assume the complex administrative load and administer the theater with a strong hand. That there was no general available in the theater was obvious from the mere fact that Stilwell had not at any time delegated such powers to anybody.

Between the Quadrant Conference in Quebec and the Cairo Conference Major General Dan I. Sultan was relieved from command of an army corps and sent to CBI to be Stilwell's deputy. As he became established, obtained Stilwell's complete confidence, and assumed most of the theater's

administrative load, Stilwell and his subordinates joined in voting Sultan "the greatest thing that ever happened to CBI." Sultan was the highest ranking major general in the United States Army. He was also the homeliest. He had been an army engineer of distinction, a stocky former West Point football star, and a rough customer who could be tougher than anybody CBI had seen, and then astonished everybody with deft, velvet-gloved diplomacy with the British. He took over almost all administration eventually and had the unique ability of getting much Stilwell wanted from the British while remaining America's most popular general in British eyes. He was quite a man, and strengthened Stilwell immeasurably.

In August the Quadrant Conference was held at the Citadel in Quebec. Out of it came the outlines of a new command for Southeast Asia that, on the surface, offered promise at long last of some activity against the enemy in Asia. The old India-Burma command structure, in which Stilwell commanded United States forces but was subordinate to the India Command for operations, was scrapped. Substituted was the new Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) responsible for air, sea, and ground operations against the enemy. The India Command was relegated to an administrative position, wherein it would train, equip, and supply British and Indian units to be turned over to SEAC. CBI was integrated with SEAC to the extent that Stilwell was named Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, in addition to his other duties as Commanding General, United States Forces, China-Burma-India; chief of staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek; Commanding General Chinese Expeditionary Force (now known as the Chinese Army in India); Lend-Lease Administrator, ad infinitum. Lord Louis Mountbatten was named Supreme Allied Commander.

This was wonderful news to everybody in CBI except those Americans who could not realize that the appointment of Stilwell as Supreme Allied Commander would be as unrealistic as it was impossible in the heart of the British Empire. Mountbatten was the antithesis of Wavell. He was young, ambitious, and had served as the commander of a destroyer flotilla. As the head of Combined Operations in England he had planned and staged the raid on Dieppe, and was considered knowledgeable regarding amphibious operations. As a cousin of King George, and supposedly a favorite of Winston Churchill, he was in a position politically strong enough to

override the obstructionism of the India Command and the Viceroy. He was probably the handsomest senior officer either America or Britain could produce which, coupled with an aggressive reputation, should appeal to the United States press.

Mountbatten had an open and charming personality and warmth. It was presumed that he would be able to charm the Americans, and it was hoped that he could get on some kind of an equitable footing with the Chiangs, who were always a menace to the British because of what they might say or allow to slip through Chinese censorship. As a footnote to his potentialities in popularity it became known that he had talked General Marshall into detailing a detachment of about fifty WACs to his SEAC. Americans, who for months had been trying to talk stubborn Vinegar Joe into requisitioning WACs, were secretly delighted that Mountbatten had put this one over on the Old Man. They were not displeased to learn at about the same time that the admiral was bringing a large contingent of WRNs to combine with the WACs in SEAC.

Of greater consequence to Americans, however, was the intelligence that Mountbatten had cracked the War Department fortress against the use of American infantrymen in CBI. Marshall promised that he would recruit a provisional regiment of American infantrymen from the Southwest Pacific and the Caribbean. The force was known by the code name “Galahad” and later became Merrill’s Marauders.

Wingate had come out of the jungle in time to return to England for a personal report to Churchill and had been taken to Quebec. Although his LRPG had been slaughtered by disease, exposure, and the enemy, the dramatic story of his exploits, compared to the Chinese refusal to move from Ledo and the British fumbling for Akyab, had been sufficient to quiet growing British public criticism of inactivity in India and was a convenient answer to American critics. Also Wingate captured Churchill’s imagination and offered that superb politician a vehicle on which he could run a show destined to convince a cynical world that the British were fighting hell for leather while doing it at an extremely small cost in blood. To skeptical United States militarists Wingate’s failure to accomplish anything of tactical importance was blamed on “a lack of an invasion force attacking

simultaneously." The whole theory of the LRPG, lay in supporting an invasion force. After weeks of milling around in the jungle, spreading consternation in the rear of the enemy, few competent military authorities, British or American, were willing to concede that Wingate's Chindits had accomplished anything of military value. This was not odd coming from a British command in India hostile to the whole thing, but it was significant when one considers that Americans were behind Wingate on the simple proposition that here was a Britisher who would fight.

The military value of the LRPG was beside the point. The propaganda value of an outfit, sneaking like American Indians behind enemy lines, living off the land and air drops, was terrific. Churchill proposed the creation of five brigades to be used under Wingate in coming operations. Wingate and Mountbatten then suggested that the War Department furnish the American regiment to fight with them and that all be flown into Central Burma by American glider squadrons. (Colonel Philip Cochran's American Air Commandos.)

Marshall wrote Stilwell about Mountbatten and told The Boss that this charming officer would be like a "fresh, clean breeze" in Southeast Asia. Later Marshall sent Stilwell stern instructions through Brigadier General Thomas S. Timberman to get along with the British because Churchill was using Stilwell's argumentative tactics as a horrid example when countering American charges that he was refusing to cooperate in the forthcoming landings at Normandy. It was well known in the top levels of command that Churchill was doing everything possible to delay a second front, despite combined pressure from Russia and America. Marshall's attitude indicated that the American Joint Chiefs of Staff were too deeply involved in trying to get maximum resources from the British for the second front, and too much was at stake to have it endangered by quibbling in India. Marshall also said that, despite everything, "the British are our most reliable allies."

Stilwell was quite willing to have peace. He was anxious to forget the quibbles and quarrels of the Wavell era and proceed with the war. His directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, had never been modified, and he was still charged with the responsibility of using every resource at his command to prosecute the war against the Japanese and open surface

communications with China. Harmony, then, must be based on a show of British willingness to fight. With Mountbatten in the saddle it looked as if this might come about.

A more careful scrutiny of Mountbatten's command structure, however, indicated that all was not so good. Although the Combined Chiefs of Staff had general supervision over the allocation of resources to Mountbatten's command and the authority to direct the general strategy, it had no authority to force Mountbatten to convert strategy directives into aggressive action against the enemy. It also had no authority to organize the command structure within the Southeast Asia Command. Some old faces reappeared. General Sir George Giffard, the highest ranking general in the British Army, still commanded the 11th Army Group and sat as a buffer between Mountbatten and all the ground forces south of the Himalayas. Although technically answerable to Mountbatten, Giffard was authorized direct communication with the War Office in London (ie., Churchill), putting him in a position to debate tactical plans and concepts of strategy formulated by Mountbatten, his commander in chief. Many believed that the voice of Giffard carried considerably more weight with the War Office than Mountbatten's.

Then there was Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse. Peirse was Mountbatten's air commander, and presumably his subordinate, but here again he had direct communication with the British Air Ministry. His was also an old face, a person who will be remembered always as one under whom the RAF fought without distinction—probably the only time that has been said of the RAF in World War II.

Completing the triumvirate of subordinate British commanders was Admiral Sir James Somerville, Commander in Chief, Eastern Fleet. Somerville was a lusty and aggressive old salt who wanted to fight, but he let it be known at the outset that he was running the naval show in SEAC, and was taking with reservations this beardless admiral whose permanent rank was only captain. Like the rest, he was permitted to communicate directly with the Admiralty in London.

Mountbatten was put in the delightful military position of Supreme Allied Commander with subordinates of his own race, but of the old hierarchy, not

completely answerable to him. It was a command that wasn't a command.

Mountbatten was given a staff supposedly modeled after Eisenhower's. Americans and Britons were integrated with Stilwell the deputy, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Pownall, chief of staff, and Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer, one of the inexperienced office generals from the War Department, deputy chief of staff in charge of operations. Wheeler was relieved as Commanding General, SOS, made principal administrative officer, and promoted to lieutenant general. This followed the Eisenhower principle down to the chief of staff level, but all chiefs of sections were British. Where, theoretically, it was a combined or Allied staff, *it was in reality a British staff with American liaison officers attached*.

Wedemeyer became the key American in this establishment. Stilwell, because of a multitude of other duties and a natural hatred for staff work, was DSAC in name only. Wheeler's position was one merely of supply planning and had nothing directly to do with operations and strategy.

Wedemeyer, a big, prematurely gray, handsome general, arrived from Washington in style. He traveled in a private plane with a load of his hand-picked subordinates. The ship created a mild sensation, in that it was the first four-motored Douglas C-54 Skymaster ever seen in Delhi. It appeared that his orders from Marshall were confined to "taking your instructions from Admiral Mountbatten." This would put him in the position of being in opposition to Stilwell, should the latter and Mountbatten ever disagree on any points at issue. That future disagreements between the admiral and the American general could be expected was obvious, considering the inevitability of tugs of war for the control of aircraft over The Hump and other resources, which were under the exclusive control of Stilwell; Stilwell's position with the Chinese, Lend-Lease, and other factors wherein the two commands would be traditionally out of harmony, regardless of any personality clashes which might develop.

With the arrival of Mountbatten and Wedemeyer, CBI entered a brief period of intra-Allied peace and good will. Stilwell came down from Chungking to find the admiral a man much to his taste. Mountbatten took an immediate fancy to Vinegar Joe. They seemed to have a lot in common under obvious surface differences. Several meetings were held at which many things were

discussed, including handling of the official communiqué. In the past Stilwell had been releasing his own separate communiqué from India after it had been cleared by Wavell, senior operational commander. Mountbatten wanted one consolidated communiqué to be released from SEAC. Stilwell agreed and called his two senior Public Relations officers to meet the admiral.

The general was in rare good humor. He bounced in on the two waiting officers and explained the situation. “Mountbatten wants a combined communiqué,” he said, "and we'll go along with him. I want you both to come in and talk to him. You will like him. He is a nice, informal guy.” Leading the two officers down the hall, Stilwell looked over his shoulder and cracked: “Don’t be afraid of Louis. Talk right up to him. Talk to him just like you talk to me, only —he laughed— “don’t be quite so rough on him.”

After the meeting one of the officers stood in the hall listening to Stilwell and Wedemeyer. “This fellow seems all right. I think he’s fair and I think he wants to do something,” Stilwell said. “I agree,” Wedemeyer replied. “He’s fine.”

“Yes, sir," Stilwell continued. “We'll back him 100 percent.” Then, in typical Stilwellese the general said: “But you watch him, Wedemeyer; keep your eye on him.”

The British tipped their hand at Quebec by agreeing to aid China but suggesting that Mountbatten be given control of the ATC line over The Hump. Quite logically, it was pointed out that with such control the admiral could bring considerable pressure on the Chinese to fight by being able indirectly to control the flow of Lend-Lease by diversion of aircraft.

This was a neat thought which conveniently ignored the question of bringing pressure on the British to fight too. It was turned down by the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. Stilwell was left in control of The Hump.

The Hump, meanwhile, had become Stilwell’s number-one headache. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had directed expansion of resources to boost Hump tonnage to ten thousand tons a month. To expedite this, the first two

types of new cargo aircraft off the assembly lines were flown to CBI. Like all new, relatively untested aircraft, these ships were full of bugs, some arriving with whole sections of rivets absent from wings and fuselages, and untried generally. During wartime emergency planes were occasionally flown directly from the assembly lines without being combat-tested or tested under conditions of altitude such as presented by The Hump. Already inadequate maintenance facilities were not expanded rapidly enough to keep pace with the arrivals, and maintenance mechanics had been trained on C-47s. The two ships became known as flying coffins, and their aluminum bones are scattered all over the Himalayas, mixed impersonally with the bones of those who tried to fly them. They later became fine, reliable work horses.

Fear of these ships, coupled with already bad morale, produced a situation where American fliers would use any excuse to keep from flying, and tonnage fell to a trickle. This bad morale was based on several things. Primarily it was the pilots' hostility to flying anything to the Chinese. These pilots knew what the Chinese Army was not doing on the eastern front and they were quite sure that the Lend-Lease equipment they risked their lives to fly was going into the private godowns of war lords and profiteers. This belief reached such exaggerated proportions that fliers wouldn't transport any ammunition or arms if there was a cloud in the sky.

There was nothing cowardly in their refusal to fly. This was demonstrated on occasions when the 14th Air Force was about to run out of gas or ammunition, and ATC fliers would fight for the chance to fly ships to Kunming in fair weather or foul. The 14th, they knew, was doing something. From the ATC point of view The Hump flight was a purely political gesture dreamed up by American politicians (i.e., Roosevelt) and of no military value. The fliers, no more anxious to die than anybody else, felt they would die, if they had to, supporting forces actually trying to win the war, but they would not die to enrich Chinese grafters or support the political foibles of American politicians or Stilwell.

Added to fear of the new aircraft and the hostility to flying Chinese equipment was the terribly depressing effect of the weather, living conditions, and the lack of any form of rotation policy where they could see

the end. Six to seven months of the year are intolerable in Assam. About 140 inches of rain fall during that period and the heat is terrible. Malaria is always present, coupled with dengue, fungus diseases, and various forms of skin rot. Monsoon storms make flying the most hazardous in the world during these months, while flying in the winter offers little relief because of the icing conditions over the Himalayas.

The officers and men were permitted to live in dismal bashas, often surrounded by seas of mud. For weeks on end there was nothing to do but play poker for stratospheric stakes. Food was bad generally, and the mess at the so-called Polo Ground transient area at Chabua was so foul that it became a source of dysentery, and finally an open CBI scandal, which Stilwell personally cleaned up. Such things are the responsibility of local command and the local commanders apparently could not command.

There had been repeated complaints about the Polo Ground mess. The filth there was becoming progressively worse because of the lack of interest on the part of commanding officers who could eat elsewhere. On the basis of official correspondence between Theater Headquarters and the ATC, the commanding officers had promised repeatedly to clean it up but nothing happened. Finally the editor of the CBI Roundup, bumptious theater newspaper, visited the mess and was shocked at what he saw. One of the ATC's senior officers happened to walk into the mess hall at the time and the editor commented on the conditions. "If you think this is bad," the ATC officer said, "you ought to see the kitchen. It's full of rotten meat that stinks up the whole area." He laughed heartily and walked out.

The Roundup carried a blistering editorial on the subject in its next issue which coincided with Stilwell's return from Washington. Stilwell called in the editor. "Are you sure of your facts?" he asked. When the editor replied affirmatively Stilwell said, "You better be," and flew to Chabua for a personal inspection. Shortly thereafter came a radio to Ferris which said, "Tell the editor of the Roundup he was right. This place stinks. Send Captain Carl Arnold up here at once to straighten things out." Stilwell tore the ATC to pieces, and Arnold laid the groundwork for what became one of the model messes of the theater, with consequent improvement in morale.

During the period when ATC casualties were so high the fliers became particularly depressed about the lack of a rotation policy. They looked at the casualty figures and all they could see ahead of them was a continuation of flying until they were all dead. They were stuck for the duration, plus they did not know what, with no hope of relief. Although Stilwell was in general hostile to any form of rotation from his theater he had nothing to do with rotation in the ATC. He controlled priorities and could divert ATC ships under specified circumstances of emergency, but he had no other control over ATC administration or command. This was true in all theaters. In reality he was without authority when he straightened out the Polo Ground mess.

This critical ATC situation threatened to break down the whole United States mission in India. Stilwell's staff in Delhi was becoming particularly alarmed about this and lack of efficiency in the SOS because, even if the structure failed to collapse completely, its weakness played directly into the hands of the British, who could use it to bolster their arguments against continuing the effort at all. At last the ATC commander was recalled and replaced by Brigadier General Earl S. Hoag, a former commercial airline executive and the great ATC trouble shooter of the war. Hoag remained long enough to reorganize the ATC and establish a rotation policy wherein pilots would be returned to the United States after a certain number of missions. Hoag was succeeded by Brigadier General Tom Hardin, and the two of them, aided by the ironing out of the bugs in the aircraft, produced a force that finally flew the undreamed-of total of 78,000 tons of supplies and equipment in one month to China and wrote one of the greatest pages of CBI history.

In a similar manner Major General W.E.R. Covell made the SOS into a highly efficient organization. ATC pilots, however, hate Hardin with a purple passion and accuse him of being responsible for the death of thousands of their buddies in what they considered to be willful disregard of human life in the attempt to boost tonnage figures by flying night and day.

The Quebec Conference had set a supply goal to China of 20,000 tons per month over The Hump, 65,000 tons over the Stilwell Road, and 54,000 tons of petroleum products through the fuel pipelines, which were scheduled to

run from Calcutta to Assam and then along the Stilwell Road to Kunming. On the basis of 7,000 tons per ship, including the petroleum products, most of which were not shipped from the United States, this grand total of 139,000 tons per month would involve only about twenty Victory ships per month running between the United States and India. This was not a particularly lusty diversion of American cargo shipping. However, this total can serve to illustrate the paucity of strain on American resources considered necessary to keep China in the war and maintain the bases and the operation of the 14th Air Force. By way of further comparison one should contrast the 139,000 tons with the 1,900,000 tons unloaded in Britain the month preceding the landings in Normandy.

To build the road and pipe lines from Ledo it was necessary to clear the Japanese from the trace. Long before actual road construction started the Japanese were well aware of the plan. Radio Tokyo broadcast the plans for the Stilwell Road, and offered the opinion that it was a good thing. "The Americans," said the Japanese, "will accomplish two things by building this road. In the first place, they will teach the British how to build roads—something they never have learned—second, the road will be finished just in time for us to use it to invade India." The Japanese themselves had built a dry-weather road from Mogaung north to Shingbwiyang, and American plans were to build the Ledo road to Shingbwiyang and then proceed down the Japanese road, improving it, moving the trace to higher levels, and doing anything else necessary to make it an all-weather road. In attempting to build this road the United States Army Corps of Engineers was embarking on what was generally conceded to be the greatest engineering project in the history of the United States Army.

Other routes had been considered, such as the North Afghan and Trans-Iranian. Both of these were too long and depended on Russia's Central Asian Railway. It was doubtful whether Russia would jeopardize her present neutrality with Japan by permitting this railway to be used regularly, and one experimental trial of the railway demonstrated that the Russians would appropriate what they wanted from the trains anyway. One desperation route had been explored in 1942 by *Ilia Tolstoi, an American captain who was a grandson of the old Russian novelist.* In search both of an alternate route to China and possible Tibetan sites for airfields, Tolstoi

led a caravan from the vicinity of Darjeeling, India, through Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, into China's Sinkiang Province. This route is blocked six months of the year by snow and negotiable only by men and animals. It takes a regular caravan ninety days to travel from India to Lhasa alone. The only other alternative lay in constructing a road from Imphal east, but that had been blocked by the British. The Ledo Road was all that remained.

Stilwell prepared to remove the Japanese from the trace. To do it he had the 38th and 22d divisions immediately available, with the 30th and Merrill's Marauders in training. The Marauders had arrived and gone into training with Wingate's new outfit about 150 miles from Bombay. Many of them had volunteered for this mission from Guadalcanal, and all had been promised furloughs upon arrival in India. Nobody was ever sure who made the promise or who made other promises which figured in the spectacular outfit's ultimate explosion. However, every Marauder knew he had been promised an India furlough, and in typical GI manner started rectifying the discrepancy when the furloughs were not forthcoming. Training, of course, was in the technique of long-range penetration. Marauder teams developed an odd habit of going out on their exercises and penetrating to Bombay. Soon they started penetrating all over India, until more than 300 of the total strength of 3,000 were AWOL.

Stilwell wanted this outfit badly. After months of pleading for a few infantrymen it was particularly galling to have this outfit taken over by the British, even though the British had been instrumental in getting the volunteers in the first place. So he went to work. He worked on Washington and Mountbatten and insisted that the Marauders were supposed to be his. The final release of the Galahad force to Stilwell may have been accelerated when it maneuvered against one of Wingate's brigades. The Marauders not only captured the brigade headquarters promptly but talked a lot of British troops into surrendering because the American food was so much better. In talking later about stealing the American regiment from the British, Stilwell said: "I don't know how I got them. I didn't have a leg to stand on." Stilwell relieved the old commander and gave the regiment to Merrill, his G-3, with instructions to get it together and ready for combat as rapidly as possible.

Stilwell wanted the Marauders to jump start the Chinese. He was well aware of the problem of trying to make an offensive force out of a bunch of Chinese who had never fought an offensive action in their entire military history. He felt that the American regiment could be used as a hooking force progressively to outflank the Japanese and force them to retire in front of the Chinese.

The plan for a North Burma invasion was known as the CAPITAL plan. It called for Stilwell's forces to make the initial penetration from Ledo to Shingbwiyang, and then proceed down the Hukawng and Mogaung valleys, with Mogaung as the objective. This was the primary objective, with Myitkyina the ultimate and main objective. Commanders must have written directives, so Stilwell asked Mountbatten for a directive ordering him to take Myitkyina. Although the Combined Chiefs of Staff had directed Mountbatten to proceed with the CAPITAL plan, the British remained reluctant to carry it out. It was impossible, they said. They lacked the resources. They did not want to give Stilwell a directive because they knew he would try to carry it out. This attitude changed considerably, however, when he asked to be ordered to take Myitkyina. They were relatively delighted to give him such a directive because "the old goat will never be able to do it in two years." Although it may sound like heresy in a war supposedly being fought shoulder to shoulder by amicable allies, there is no question that some of the British privately hoped for a rousing Stilwell defeat. A defeat would humiliate and discredit this scrawny cocklebur.

The plan called for Stilwell to advance from Ledo, for the British 14th Army to advance from Imphal over the Tiddim Road to the Chindwin, with Mandalay the ultimate objective. The Wingate force was to be flown in to North Central Burma by American gliders, with the objective of creating a diversion, to cut Japanese lines of reinforcement and supply to their troops facing Stilwell. In addition, the British were to attack down the Mayu Peninsula after Akyab again. This last was considered to be military nonsense because the Japanese force thus contained would be only about one fourth the size of the British force necessary to contain it. The British, however, had become obsessed with the desire to avenge the previous humiliation on the Arakan.

In addition to the effort by the British and Stilwell, the Chinese, in the early months of 1944, had agreed to attack down the Salween from Yunnan. It was known that Stilwell would have put sixteen divisions in a fair state of equipment and ammunition by that time, and American personnel would handle supply and medical facilities. Even though these Chinese forces would not be well trained in the Western sense, it was presumed that they would have little difficulty cleaning up the small detachments of Japanese that could be spared to meet them.

The Japanese had been reinforced in Burma since the fiasco of January 1943, and numbered nine divisions when Stilwell got ready to kick off. The Allies, however, had sixteen British and Indian divisions, three Chinese divisions and a provisional American regiment under Stilwell, five British and Indian brigades (equivalent to American regiments) under Wingate, and sixteen Chinese divisions under Marshal Wei Li-haung in Yunnan. This, then, gave the Allies thirty-five established divisions, plus provisional forces equal in strength to another division, to match nine enemy divisions. In addition the Allies had gained control of the sea and complete mastery of the air. The Japanese presumed that advantage of interior lines of communication could be nullified by hitting at several points on his perimeter, so that he would be unable to mass his forces in any one place. To an impartial observer the Japanese position was impossible.

Mountbatten, who was supposed to bring dynamics in lieu of apathy, said: "Wavell should have attacked when there were only four Japanese divisions. Now there are nine and we lack necessary resources." Stilwell replied: "Delay another year and there will be more Japanese reinforcements. Let's go. We can do it." Yet the British insisted that there were insufficient resources to attack. They fell back on the old argument of logistics, and argued that the Assam—Bengal Railway could not support Stilwell and the Fourteenth Army. This railway, called by Americans "India's answer to the Toonerville Trolley," had three gauges from Calcutta to Ledo and few bridges. This made ferrying operations essential across the Brahmaputra River. They also argued that native labor in the port of Calcutta was unreliable, and Calcutta would have to support ninety percent of the planned operations.

The Japanese had staged small nuisance raids on the port, using three bombers per raid. These had done negligible damage, but at one time promoted an exodus of an estimated 500,000 fear-crazed Indians from the city, which left Calcutta paralyzed. The way the British got these Indians back was to starve them until their only choice was to return and face the possibility of bombing, or die in the hinterlands from lack of food. The British would not make it financially worthwhile for the coolies to remain on the docks because to do so would upset the economy.

The Americans had the answer to both problems. "Let us," they said, "take over the Assam—Bengal Railway and operate it with our own railroad battalions. We will also put port battalions in Calcutta to handle the unloading of all American and Chinese cargo."

This suggestion for taking over the railway was a change of pace on Stilwell's part. In 1942 the British had suggested that American railway operating battalions take over the Assam—Bengal LOC (Line of Communications), but Stilwell, carrying out his orders from Washington to conserve American manpower, stated that the operation of the LOC was a British responsibility. Conferences were held between British and Americans to determine ways and means of improving the efficiency of the line, which the British accepted as their responsibility. These conferences and a change in the railway's civilian management failed to produce the desired results, and tonnage allocated for The Hump was falling short of targets, which indicated automatically that Stilwell's military operation might get into trouble because he would depend on the same LOC.

Hence, Stilwell agreed to ask for the American railway personnel in order to enlarge the amounts of his Hump and combat tonnage and, of equal importance, to wrest control of the railway from the British. Under British management his supplies could be delayed or sidetracked at any time in favor of any crisis that might develop at Imphal or on the Arakan. Stilwell, as usual, "was at the end of the line."

Although the British had persistently refused to militarize the railway, the Viceroy's Council approved turning it over to the United States Army in November 1943. Requisitions were submitted for 4,000 railway operators.

Meanwhile American port battalions had been requested to handle American and China-consigned goods in Calcutta.

At the Cairo Conference Mountbatten and Churchill had made strong recommendations for the diversion of sufficient landing craft to stage an amphibious operation, designed to retake the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The military value of such an operation largely consisted in furnishing a possible fighter base to support later amphibious operations on Rangoon. The most pessimistic intelligence estimates placed the Japanese Andaman garrison at not more than 5,000 men, cut off from all supplies and reinforcements by Eastern Fleet dominance of the Bay of Bengal, so it was considered to have all the prospects of a cheap conquest which might bolster Britain's lagging Oriental prestige and indicate to the Western world that the British were not dogging it in Asia after all.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to resurvey landing craft resources, and approved the operation so long as it did not interfere with the pushing of the CAPITAL plan. Mountbatten was directed to submit detailed plans for the operation containing resources desired. After coming to India, Mountbatten's people dutifully planned to take the Andamans and asked, among other things, for naval combat craft and landing craft in numbers sufficient to put 52,000 men ashore. "They aren't going to take any chances on Louis losing his first one," was Stilwell's chuckling comment.

What landing craft had been allocated for Mountbatten were diverted later to the Anzio operation, so the British never got their amphibious operation until 1945, when they landed at Akyab, to find the town garrisoned by one RAF pilot, who had made a forced landing in his L-5 Cub the day before. The few remaining Japanese were gone. The British landed at Rangoon later to find the city held by another RAF pilot, who had made a forced landing in a Mosquito bomber. This led to the American crack that "the British took Akyab with an L-5, Rangoon with a Mosquito, and will take Singapore with a B-24."

The 38th Division had advanced its patrols to Tagap, the highest point the Stilwell Road would have to traverse to reach Shingbwiyang. Despite shortages in tonnage and an obvious lack of men, Stilwell decided to advance on October 26, 1943, to clear the trace for the road. The British

were trying to delay him, without seeming to, presumably so that they would not look bad by not doing the same. Stilwell had notified Mountbatten that he was ready to proceed, even though the 22d Division was not yet in Ledo and the 30th was in the basic training stage. The Marauders would not be ready and in position before February 1944.

In planning for the operation the British had established a chain of command wherein they could keep a tight rein on Stilwell—or so they thought. Although he was Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, first in authority under Mountbatten, as commander of the Chinese Army in India he was placed under the Fourteenth Army, commanded by Slim. Over Slim was Giffard's Eleventh Army Group, and over Giffard was Stilwell (presumably) and Mountbatten. Stilwell, however, refused to act as DSAC to the extent that he would not become a resident member of Lord Louis's headquarters.

A very obvious reason why Stilwell would not function as DASC was because he was aware that the Chinese might not fight unless he was physically present to push them. He was the only foreigner who understood the Chinese. He was the only foreigner delegated direct command over the Chinese units. As it turned out he would be the only high-ranking general who would be able to put up with the Spartan discomforts, physical and mental strain, which went along with commanding Chinese in the jungles of North Burma.

In military parlance it is normally unacceptable for a senior general to fight under one junior to him. This is a matter of classic military protocol. Stilwell not only ranked Slim in the sense of being personally senior to him, he ranked him in the chain of command as well. Stilwell had liked General Slim during the 1942 Burma campaign, and considered him a fighting general kept under wraps by Giffard and British politics. So, when the command was agreed on, Stilwell approached Slim after the meeting, saluted with a twinkle in his eye, and said, "Sir, as Fourteenth Army commander, have you any orders for me?" With equal gravity Slim replied, "No, sir. As DSAC, do you have any orders for me, sir?" "Not on your life," replied Stilwell, and the two parted with a grin.

It is a matter of record that Slim never gave Stilwell an order. He let him alone, and undoubtedly enjoyed Stilwell's subsequent successes as much as some of his colleagues disliked them. Giffard and Mountbatten did issue orders at the start. These were orders for Stilwell to delay his advance. All kinds of reasons were conjured up, until Mountbatten sent a message to Stilwell: "Delay your advance because we cannot supply you." Stilwell replied: "I will be responsible for my supply. I am advancing." Added to the message was the implication that Stilwell would proceed come what might and no matter what the British decided to do. If they wanted to come along with their two army corps at Imphal, fine. If not, Stilwell would proceed anyway.

Nobody understood the seriousness of Stilwell's position more than he. By all the accepted military axioms Stilwell should have waited. His main LOC from Calcutta was inadequate, and future expansion under American operation was doubtful, though expected to keep up with the troops even if the troops advanced rapidly. Uncertain weather conditions made air supply, never tried before for such a large operation, problematical. His troops were untried and had given no ground for confidence by their 1942 showing. He didn't have enough troops to meet the tough 18th Japanese Division, holding possibly impregnable positions in the invisibility of the jungle. Because of the inability to see targets, the value of tactical bombing would be minimized. The Japanese, because of the well-known British desire to keep out of Burma, would be able to divert troops from the British fronts and reinforce their 18th Division almost at will. It was quite probable that Stilwell would walk into a defeat and possibly be overtaken by a military disaster.

General Marshall wrote in his report that "no American officer had demonstrated more clearly his knowledge of the strength and weakness of the Japanese forces than General Stilwell and the steps necessary to defeat them in Asia." Stilwell was starting the campaign that made the above quotation possible. He was starting it supremely confident that he would be victorious, and hoping against hope that his showing would be so good that he would literally shame the British into action. To anybody else the operation would have been a great gamble. To Stilwell, with his knowledge of both the Japanese and the Chinese, the campaign seemed assured. He had

the necessary confidence in his Chinese and himself, plus that unswerving singleness of purpose which had kept him moving toward the objectives of his government and the Combined Chiefs of Staff, regardless of obstacle after discouraging obstacle.

Stilwell attended the Cairo Conference in November. In doing so he was forced to absent himself from his theater during the critical initial period of the Chinese advance. Despite the presence of Generalissimo and Madame Chiang in Cairo, Churchill once again led the attack to stop this "futile" land offensive and the building of the road. The old arguments were raised about the campaign's impossibility and how it would be more sound to move amphibiously to the Andamans, then against Rangoon, and then north through Burma. This last argument was not offered with any idea of mounting a Rangoon offensive, because Churchill was quite well aware that there would be insufficient resources in landing craft available for such an operation until the war in Europe was over.

As usual the argument hinged around the question of "what will the Chinese do?" Stilwell maintained that they would fight and fight well. The British maintained that they would not. They cited the example of their own Indian troops, considered unreliable in most cases despite years of white training. President Roosevelt continued to throw his weight behind the Chinese, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to back Stilwell, and everything looked all right until the radio came.

The 38th Division started advancing from Tagap on October 26. Everything went along all right: until early in November, when General Sun's Chinese hit their first strong opposition at the northern end of the Hukawng Valley. They suddenly started to fight like Chinese troops had always fought. They dispersed into small groups, sat down, dug in, and hollered for help. Boatner moved around among them, trying to get Sun to consolidate his forces and start outflanking the enemy, but to no avail. Boatner then sent a radio to Ferris in Delhi, explaining the Chinese refusal to budge, and asked Ferris to notify The Boss. Through a mistake the message was decoded and given to Wedemeyer instead of Stilwell. *Wedemeyer showed it to the British.* Churchill immediately confronted the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

“You see,” he said sarcastically, “even Stilwell’s chief of staff says they are no good and are not fighting.”

In spite of this evidence the Americans stuck to their guns and the CAPITAL plan was permitted to proceed. As a sop to the British, it was agreed to furnish some amphibious craft for the Andamans so long as no resources needed for CAPITAL would be diverted. These craft later went to Anzio.

As an aside, both Stilwell and Mountbatten had private conversations with Roosevelt about the same subject—China. After Quebec, Mountbatten had talked to the President, who told the admiral he must look upon himself as half British and half American, working for both the President and the Prime Minister. He impressed on Mountbatten his desire to do everything possible for the Chinese because they were a wonderful race of people who had been putting up glorious resistance to the Japanese for many, many years. In Cairo, Mountbatten asked Roosevelt if he didn’t think it time to revise the American policy in China. Mountbatten told him that the facts about China, the Chinese Army, and the Chinese Government were quite different from those recited by the President after Quebec. The admiral stated that the Chinese Army was a rabble and the Government a medieval, reactionary instrument feeding on opportunism and devoted to avoiding conflict until time to settle the Communists after the war. The President, according to Mountbatten’s own statement, told him that that was all the more reason why they should be helped. In other words, American aid was to save them from themselves and strengthen them so that they could gain the necessary confidence to make a positive contribution in the war.

At about the same time Stilwell and John Davies, the general’s political adviser, had about forty-five minutes with the President. They told him virtually the same things about China and asked for specific instructions. Stilwell wanted to know how far the President would back him in bringing pressure to bear on Chiang and asked, as he had in the past, to be permitted to use Lend-Lease for bargaining purposes. Davies pointed out that America’s bargaining position became weaker as Allied victory became more assured, and that open-handed largess without return in China was weakening, rather than strengthening, America’s position with the Chinese,

who took what they got, yelled for more, and were required to give nothing positive in return. At the end of the forty-five minutes they got the following answer from Roosevelt, who threw back his arms and, with his wonderfully winning smile, said: “I want you both to feel you are my personal representatives.” That was all.

Largely by the sheer force of Stilwell’s determination and insistence that the Chinese would fight (as soon as he got back to see that they did), the CAPITAL plan was left unmolested. From that day Stilwell’s reputation as a prophet or a military fool depended on what he could get out of the Chinese.

Stilwell followed the Chiangs to Chungking, where he sat down to some solid cold turkey with the Generalissimo. The Generalissimo realized that more than anybody Stilwell had saved CAPITAL. He was probably grateful. In any event he gave Vinegar Joe carte blanche to handle the North Burma situation as he saw fit.

On December 21 The Boss hung his battered musette bag in North Burma, donned his old campaign hat, gave Sun two or three courteous but admonitory boots in the tail, and started a ten-month campaign in which the Chinese not only learned they could fight but learned to like it.

CHAPTER SIX

The Return

IN THE LIGHT of what had just transpired there were few people who would have given Uncle Joe much of a chance to drive the Chinese troops any place except backward. They had sat down and yelled for help, just as they always had done before getting this fine American training and equipment. Sun passed out the customary alibis for inactivity, coupled with the usual Chinese falsifications on the tactical situation. But things were different this time. In the first place Stilwell's authority to command had been established beyond question. The Boss had put that over with the Generalissimo. Second, American liaison teams were functioning down as low as regiments in all cases, and down to battalions in some.

These teams had their own radios and sent daily coded reports on the situation, based on their own observations, to Stilwell's headquarters. The liaison officers had no command authority over the Chinese, but they had a powerful purchase on the Chinese commanders because they relayed supply requirements back to Stilwell. These officers had the power to veto Chinese requisitions, which put them in the position of exerting a strong influence on the actual commanders.

Although these liaison teams had supply and advice to the Chinese leaders as their primary official function, their greatest value lay in being able to furnish Stilwell with accurate information on Chinese and Japanese dispositions, and information on what the Chinese were doing as differentiated from what the Chinese said they were doing. Often there was a vast difference. These American officers and men were Stilwell's eyes and ears. In addition they had to be prophets, because often they had to predict Chinese intentions which were frequently at variance with Chinese statements. These things added up to one of the most delicate and difficult jobs given any Americans in World War II. The Americans were policemen. Cops seldom are popular, but the liaison officers were supposed to maintain cordial relations and respect, despite the nature of their job, the language bar, and the mixing of two vastly different cultures.

Added to all this was the morale problem involved. These officers and men were destined to spend months on end in the heart of the densest jungle with no amenities, with what food they could prepare themselves or get from the Chinese, and having for companions only themselves and the alien Chinese. It is a tribute to their essential strength of character and Stilwell's personal power to inspire them that only a very few blew up as the campaign progressed.

Stilwell established his headquarters in a dank basha at Shingbwiyang. The road had not reached "Shing" yet, so there was no transportation. Stilwell himself had to see exactly what was wrong with the Chinese effort, so he started walking the muddy jungle trails to small troop concentrations scattered over a wide perimeter. He spent several days at this grueling task, to the discomfort of his aide, Major Richard Young, and Colonel John Willey, in charge of the Shingbwiyang base. Willey later became a brigadier general. They had to walk with him, and they not only failed to enjoy these marches at Stilwell's killing pace, but they became particularly worried that Stilwell might become the victim of a Japanese sniper or some Japanese patrol filtering through Chinese lines. In jungle warfare there is no such thing as a line. Both sides deploy their forces into what amounts to outposts and strong points, permitting relatively easy infiltration by either group. Stilwell ignored warnings and traveled the trails accompanied by no more than two or three Americans and, upon occasion, a Chinese bodyguard.

At night he studied maps of the area by candlelight, and this, added to his personal reconnaissances, eventually made him the greatest living authority on the location of tiny native villages and the routes and condition of the trails and terrain in North Burma. His memory was such that he never forgot what he studied and what he saw. It was a characteristic which always confounded staff officers, who might have faulty information or be trying to cover up some lack of knowledge by evasive conversation.

Stilwell arrived at Shingbwiyang on December 21. He had his musette bag, a bedroll, a carbine, and a change of clothing. His campaign hat was held jauntily on his head by means of a shoestring. It seemed that everything he did was on a shoestring. He had his old GI shoes and his canvas leggings. He wore an old field jacket (it was cool in December) without insignia of

rank. With his unruly eyebrows, his glasses, and his funny, loping walk, he looked like some itinerant vegetable peddler a little down on his luck. The more hardy newspaper correspondents followed him on these treks and became known as “Stilwell’s Irregulars.”

The décor of the Stilwell field headquarters was somewhat unorthodox in comparison with the normal establishments of lieutenant generals in or out of the field. He had one aide, Young. The two of them moved from a basha to the ultimate grandeur of a GI tent, which became office and sleeping quarters. The general had an ordinary camp cot to sleep on. His desk was a packing box, but he had the luxury of a couple of wicker chairs. He shaved and bathed out of a helmet the same as everybody else. He started getting hot water when his aide produced Sergeant Hua Wa-t'ing to be his orderly. Hua was the ugliest Chinese in Burma. When he laughed, which was often, his little eyes would disappear into the wrinkles and folds of his face, and he would demonstrate a truly remarkable set of brown-stained, snaggled dentures. The general called him “Buttercup.” Buttercup became an institution and remained with the general until he became so spoiled by cigarettes, flashlights, jungle hammocks, and loot obtained from war correspondents and others who cut in on his services as a boiler of water and laundryman, that Young was forced to fire him. When Buttercup returned to his labor battalion he had two fountain pens that wouldn’t write, two wrist watches that wouldn’t run, a jungle hammock, two flashlights without batteries, and many other odds and ends. He had more face than any other Chinese in the jungle.

Stilwell ate in the regular officers’ mess. This mess lacked the refinements and social distinction found at such places as SHAEF, for instance. There was no general’s mess, full colonel’s mess, field officer’s mess, junior officer’s mess. There were no special dainties for the senior officers. There was no general’s bar where these worthies could prepare for dinner with an old fashioned made from good American bourbon, while the combat officers bought cheap liquor in lieu of an American whisky ration that seldom arrived. There were no tablecloths, no napkins, no crystal, no china, or other things considered so essential to the high-ranking general’s mess. There weren’t even any dishes or knives and forks. Stilwell used an issue mess kit and a cup carved from bamboo by the Kachins. He sat down with

the rest of the officers, regardless of rank, on a bench made from bamboo poles, and ate off a bare bamboo table. He took his place in the chow line the same as the rest, and rarely moved ahead of others who might have preceded him in line. The food consisted of C rations and other items of standard army issue to troops in the field, It was not gaudy and sometimes it wasn't even appetizing.

Stilwell was never one to talk much. He never wasted words, but he was a good listener. He would sit at the table and listen to the conversations of the other officers. When subjects in which he was interested were under discussion he would cut in with incisive questions. In such an atmosphere he always knew what was going on, and was not isolated from the details of his command, as is often the case of a high-ranking general separated from his command by orthodox staff procedure. Normally the chief of staff absorbs the details and only passes the overall picture up to the commanding general. This often permits a chief of staff to hide shortcomings from the commander. It was impossible to do this with Stilwell. He was apt to turn up any place, and he knew far more what was going on in his command than any of his staff officers, who were forced to spend most of their time back at headquarters.

This proved so embarrassing to Colonel Robert L. Cannon, acting as chief of staff of the field forces, that he directed Willey to construct a separate mess tent for the general when the latter moved forward to Ningam Sakan. Cannon made no bones about the fact that he wanted Stilwell isolated so that he wouldn't be getting so much information ahead of the staff. It made the staff look bad, Cannon thought. At Ningam The Boss shared a bamboo basha with the junior officers garrisoned locally. Generals are lonesome because the higher they get the more isolated they become. Stilwell liked rubbing elbows with his people regardless of their station. That was one of the reasons why his troops loved him.

Willey established two tents for the general. One was sleeping quarters, which had a comfortable bomb shelter as an auxiliary. This was completed sometime ahead of the mess tent. Stilwell gave the one designated as his bedroom to the war correspondents. "The bomb shelter will make a good

darkroom for the photographers," he said. He used the mess tent one day and abandoned it by moving his advance headquarters forward the next.

Stilwell was a person of great natural simplicity. He never demonstrated that more clearly than one time the previous fall when Mountbatten asked him and Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell, the American supply chief, to be guests in his Delhi palace. Mountbatten was living in a gaudy pile which was the property of an Indian prince. It was called Faridkot and was one of the most luxurious of all the princes' palaces in Delhi. It contained, among other things, one bedroom with the ceiling and walls made from mirrors. This was the prince's personal bedroom and he had stipulated that this room must never be used. Mountbatten talked him out of this on the grounds he might have to entertain Stilwell from time to time. "The American general is very important," he said. "We must give him the best." Reluctantly the prince agreed to the use of the mirrored room for Stilwell only.

When General Brehon H. Somervell and Stilwell were supposed to weekend in the palace The Boss knew about the bedroom. He started to fidget. Mountbatten led the two Americans into the place but Stilwell, by methods never revealed, crossed up Mountbatten and maneuvered the commander of American service forces into the mirrored bedroom. Stilwell took the room reserved for Somervell. "Gosh," Stilwell said privately, "I couldn't sleep in that room. I'd have had to look at myself all the time. I couldn't stand the thought of that." Uncle Joe was as pleased with that piece of legerdemain as he would have been with a major victory over the Japanese. Oddly enough, Mountbatten was tickled, too, and laughed about it many times thereafter. Stilwell never stayed in the palace again. "Too fancy for me," he said.

There is no question but that the Supreme Allied Commander and his deputy held a warm regard for each other. This initial friendliness, however, was not such that it could survive without strain the same old divergence in policy which once again split the British and the Americans. Mountbatten's staff had started planning another change in the basic theater strategy which, had it been accepted, would have canceled the CAPITAL operation. The new plan was given the code name AXIOM and called for a bypassing

of Burma altogether and an amphibious operation against Sumatra, Java, and Malaya.

Stilwell attended some of the staff meetings in which this plan was discussed and fought against it with increasing hostility. He pointed out that the plan was contrary to the theater directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and the strategy was going away from, rather than advancing on, Japan. The British knew that the United States would have isolated the Japanese in Malaysia and the Indies by the time they could get necessary resources for AXIOM. They hoped to get the necessary matériel from Lend-Lease. AXIOM was the ne plus ultra of plans wherein the British could fight the cheap war and still make a great show of strength for the benefit of the natives in recapturing their empire.

Vinegar Joe was there to make them fight in Burma, to make them contribute to the aid of China, to make them carry out the directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Wedemeyer, the deputy chief of staff for operations, on the other hand, was there to "carry out Mountbatten's instructions." Wedemeyer was going along with the British under orders from Mountbatten. This increased Stilwell's anger. One day Stilwell attacked the AXIOM plan with vigor at a staff meeting. Stilwell opposed the plan on the simple grounds that:

1. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had ordered an attack in Burma; and

2. Preparations for carrying out these plans were far from complete yet all of SEAC energy was being devoted to efforts designed to get their orders canceled rather than attempting to carry them out. He urged only that the orders of the Combined Chiefs be carried out. Wedemeyer, who had been chief of the Plans and Strategy Division of the War Department, rose to his feet and with what Stilwell considered to be condescension prefaced his argument in behalf of AXIOM with a remark belittling Stilwell by implying Stilwell had a limited command and missed the "big picture." "Those of us who have been engaged in global strategy feel . . ." Wedemeyer said. Wedemeyer tried to gloss over the matter by telling how the Combined Chiefs worked and implied that they would consider an alternate plan of merit if presented to them. Although nobody has repeated what Vinegar Joe implied, it was said that he rose from his chair in such a rage that he

practically lost control of himself. He is said to have cut Wedemeyer down with a sarcastic venom only a furious Stilwell could produce. The general stormed out of the meeting, left Delhi, and never attended another SEAC staff meeting until much later, after AXIOM had been ditched and Stilwell's forces were in Myitkyina. That was the end of the honeymoon.

Wedemeyer was being used to put forward British aims. His position, under his orders, was nearly as untenable as Stilwell's —something Wedemeyer only recognized later. Mountbatten asked him to attend another conference in 1944, and the American general agreed to go only after it was understood that he would "not be a front man" for the British party line.

Despite all this, Stilwell, strangely enough, retained his liking for Mountbatten. Much later the admiral visited him in the jungles of the Hukawng Valley. There were some points at issue, and the two commanders had some sharp engagements. After the admiral left, Stilwell, almost overwhelmed by the natural obstacles he was facing in his military campaign, lashed out at the British in a conversation with a staff officer.

The officer to whom he was addressing his remarks tried to offer Stilwell at least one happy thought. "You will have to admit, General," he said, "that Lord Louis is a nice guy." "Yes," the general shot back; "yes. That's what makes him so dangerous. Even I like him!"

The North Burma campaign was not going too well. The Chinese were just beginning to get their battle legs but lacked confidence. Also, operations were being delayed by the mud of unseasonal rains. Stilwell would fret and fume. He was hard to live with those days. Adding to his dilemma were Marshall's stern instructions to get along with the British. "What am I supposed to do?" Stilwell asked. "I'm a good soldier. I can take orders. But am I prohibited from arguing with these people during the planning stage? I'll take orders once a decision has been made, but I can't keep quiet all the time and carry out my orders from the American Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Stilwell's loyalty to Marshall was absolute. Many times he said: "I have no quarrel with George Marshall. He is doing everything he can for me." Back in the discouraging dog days of 1943 a group of Stilwell's advisers urged him to permit a publicity campaign, designed to arouse American public

opinion in support of sending him more resources in men and matériel. Along with this they urged him to establish what amounted to a lobby in the War Department to bring pressure upon American military chiefs in the hope that they would divert some resources from Eisenhower and MacArthur. It was pointed out that MacArthur was using the press at regular intervals to nudge the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and that both MacArthur and Eisenhower kept large staffs of their own officers on temporary duty in the War Department for the sole purpose of lobbying in their behalf.

"No," Stilwell replied, "I will not bring any pressure to bear on George Marshall. He's running a war all over the world. It's up to him to determine who should get what. It is not up to theater commanders. Marshall always has been fair with me. I'll be fair with him."

This was typical of Stilwell's integrity, of his refusal to play back-door politics with those who were his friends. Despite personal difficulties with Chinese like Ho and Chiang who, time and again, failed to keep their agreements with him, he fought their battle in Cairo to the last ditch as a matter of principle. He could easily enough have let them down and moved to a field command over American troops in the Pacific, a status that would have been infinitely more agreeable to him.

To digress for a moment, Stilwell was a strange contradiction of astute and inept politician. For almost four years he outmaneuvered the British in the political struggle to determine the theater strategy, and by so doing developed for himself a host of enemies. He played a masterful game with the British, but he neglected to develop a strong coterie of powerful American backers to counteract his natural enemies when he had opportunities right in his lap. The President was in the habit of sending personal representatives to the Orient to bring back individual reports or to prod the Gimo into action. Nobody can understand what goes on in China without remaining in the country for a long time and watching closely. So almost any American observer falls in love with Chinese politicians immediately, under the adroit wooing stage-managed by Madame Chiang (Mayling Soong.) The Madame can sell anything to an American. She's a real genius who has staged "spontaneous" welcomes for visiting American

dignitaries which reached a peak when most of Chungking turned out to overwhelm Wendell Willkie to such an extent that Willkie was uninterested in anything Stilwell might have to say. Stilwell never seemed able to accept the political formalities required by his dual function of military leader and diplomat.

Willkie went home indifferent, if not hostile, to Stilwell. The same was true of Dr. Currie, Donald Nelson, and Pat Hurley. A few cocktail parties and some judicious pats on the back might have made these people Stilwell partisans. 'The props might have been unnecessary. Just meeting might have been sufficient. Stilwell's personality was so charming that when he wanted to turn it on he was his own best salesman. Only once did he bother to sell himself to a person of diplomatic importance, and in that instance he had to be dragged to the meeting by the ear like a small boy. The Boss had arrived in Delhi for the third time since the arrival of Ambassador Phillips as Roosevelt's personal representative. Stilwell had never called on him. Phillips was one of America's highest-ranking career diplomats. He was a shrewd, tough, and honest international politician. He was a graduate of Groton and Harvard and one of those "dear Bill, dear Franklin' intimates of the President. His position was sufficiently powerful so that General H.H. (Hap) Amold, supreme among army politicians, ran right over to Phillips's house to pay his respects when the air forces general was in Delhi during the fall of 1943.

Phillips was about to return to the United States to report to Roosevelt on the India situation and would, undoubtedly, pass on Stilwell's stewardship as well. John Davies was worried about this and persistently needled the Old Man to meet Phillips. Davies knew that Phillips, on the basis of what he had been hearing, was not impressed with Stilwell. Vinegar Joe just couldn't be bothered with the niceties of protocol and making diplomatic calls. He had enough on his mind without sipping tea with the diplomatic corps. Davies finally dragged him, literally, to a meeting with Phillips. The two men, both Eastern Yankees, had a delightful session for an hour, in which both took down their hair, and Phillips returned to the United States the only important Stilwell partisan among the many civilian delegates Roosevelt sent to the Orient. Uncle Joe's indifference to the necessities of

purely personal politics remained the despair of his closest friends and advisers.

Sitting in his lonely, soggy tents and bashas in the jungle, Stilwell was removed from the posturing of personal salesmanship, the political nuances of Chungking, and the irritating verbosities of Supreme Allied Commander's meetings in Delhi. Hearn represented him with Ho and the Generalissimo, and Sultan was pinch-hitting with the British. Stilwell was in his element in the jungle. Despite the periodic annoyances of his command over the Chinese and recurrent troubles, wherein it seemed that even the elements were against him, Stilwell was happy. He was never happier than when he was hiking the jungle trails, sometimes walking younger but less hardy lieutenants into the ground. His endurance became a jungle legend. His natural democracy, eternal simplicity, and humorous disregard of personal danger made him the subject of a profound, almost universal, adoration. In the eyes of GIs there was nothing he could not do. He could do no wrong.

The 22d Division had moved into combat in January and, like the 38th, was fighting but fumbling while doing it. To develop combat confidence the general was actually fighting them by battalions himself. When he found a platoon of Japanese in the jungle he would put two Chinese companies against it. When he discovered a company, two battalions would be sent to do the job. The Chinese were learning that they could beat their traditional enemy. The Boss was not convinced yet about his Chinese generals. In discussing them, and other generals of the Chinese Army, he said: "Due to political appointments and lack of higher military schools in China, the High Command is full of officers whose attainments do not match their responsibilities."

The road had been pushed to Shingbwiyang. Trucks, jeeps, and other vehicles became available to the Chinese and Stilwell's staff. The worst of the road construction was over because there were no mountains ahead comparable to the Patkai Mountains Pick's men had conquered. Also there was the dry-weather road built by the Japanese. From now on it was a matter of clearing the enemy from the trace, rerouting the road to higher ground in places to avoid monsoon floods, but in general to follow and

improve the road the Japanese had built so obligingly. Although it was supposed to be the dry season there were heavy rains, which made the trace to Shingbwiyang a quagmire along the section from Hell Gate that had not been surfaced with gravel. One officer drove the 107 miles from Ledo to Shing in a jeep. It took him more than thirty hours of continuous driving, over sections so bad the supposedly indomitable jeep spent considerable time stuck. The road was in such condition that convoys to supply the combat troops were almost out of the question. Tonnage from the convoys that got through went to the ne and road-building troops in the rear areas.

Hence it became necessary to supply by air. Not too many C-47s from Combat Cargo and Troop Carrier commands were available, but the pilots of this aerial supply line flew with such audacity and such devotion to their duty that those on the ground never ran out of essential supplies, despite the hazard of the weather and the perilous necessity for low-altitude flying to make parachute supply drops in mountainous country. Often The Boss would walk out of his basha in the morning, look at the clouds around the mountains, and say: “I guess they won’t be in today.” But the drone of engines would announce the arrival of the first supply-carrying ship and soon it would nose through the overcast and start dropping its load. Many pilots and crews gave their lives to keep Stilwell supplied in any and all weather. Their attitude was quite different from the original ATC group, who practically refused to fly supplies to the Chinese in China. Stilwell’s Chinese were fighting and advancing in North Burma. The American fliers respected them and supplied them without complaint.

Although Deputy Supreme Commander, Stilwell, as commander of Chinese troops, was under the operational control of Slim and the Fourteenth Army. “I would fight under a corporal,” Stilwell said, "as long as he would let me fight." The Boss, however, wanted to get out from under General Sir George Giffard’s Eleventh Army Group. Stilwell saw in Giffard the epitome of do nothing and the greatest single enemy to his desires and ambitions. Stilwell dreaded some sleight of hand in which Giffard might not only hinder, but actually stop, his advance down the Hukawng Valley. Consequently, Uncle Joe quite shrewdly talked Mountbatten into permitting his Northern Combat Area Command to pass directly under Mountbatten’s control when the Chinese reached Kamaing about 125 miles south of

Shingbwiyang. Giffard opposed this agreement, but not too vigorously, because he didn't believe the Chinese would ever get to Kamaing anyway. Mountbatten agreed promptly, which delighted Stilwell.

In addition it was agreed that the Chindits, the five brigades commanded by Wingate, would come under Stilwell. Stilwell's tactical plan called for his forces to move south on Mogaung and Myitkyina, with Wingate deploying in positions to the south to cut avenues of Japanese supply and reinforcement to the latter's divisions facing the Chinese. Wingate approved of this, as both he and Stilwell were men of action and saw eye to eye on one essential—killing as many Japanese as possible. Stilwell did not believe in the philosophy of LRP, but he admired Wingate as an audacious personal leader, a feeling which Wingate reciprocated in his attitude to the American general.

By February Stilwell's Chinese were beginning to show some signs of fighting ability. A battalion of Liao's 22d Division had caught some Japanese at a little place called Patzi Hka, surrounded them, and killed about 325. This was by American count. American liaison officers always double-checked Chinese enemy casualty figures. Stilwell was in a pretty good frame of mind and had become tractable enough to accept a personal bodyguard composed of three Gls and a Singapore-born Punjabi, Dara Singh. Singh was quite a character. He had been a professional prize fighter and during the early stages of the Chinese-Japanese War moved to Canton, and finally went to work for General Yu on the Burma Road. Singh became a colonel in the Chinese Army and ran convoys. As Stilwell's bodyguard he armed himself with a Tommy gun, a carbine, a Mauser pistol, and a .45-caliber Colt automatic. He carried extra clips of ammunition for each. He was a one-man arsenal.

On February 5 The Boss was not too pleased with the progress of one of the Chinese regiments, so he took his bodyguard, his aide, another American officer, and three newspaper correspondents and started for the regimental command post. Stilwell had moved fourteen miles in advance of his advance headquarters and was living in a basha at Ningam Sakan. On this junket he was able to travel by jeep about ten miles to the Tanai River, from

where it was necessary to walk another ten miles over a muddy up-and-down trail to the headquarters of the Chinese colonel.

Dara Singh led off, with The Boss pushing him into the memorable 105 paces per minute. The general condescended to let everybody rest five minutes at the end of each hour. By the time the party had covered two thirds of the distance one correspondent, James Brown of INS, and the extra American officer, had fallen out from exhaustion. The two overtook Stilwell sitting along the trail waiting for them. Brown, whose face normally looks as though he had been living on an expense account for twenty years, was ruddier than usual as he literally fell to the ground at the general's feet. Stilwell, who showed not a trace of the march, was obviously tickled at having outwalked the younger men. With his cigarette holder held at an angle he cocked his head at Brown with his characteristic birdlike gesture and said pertly: "Your face seems flushed, Mr. Brown."

After a brief rest he told the stragglers seriously that they must not fall out during the remainder of the walk because of the danger of Japanese patrols. Brown's pack was being shifted back and forth between Darrell Berrigan of the United Press and Toby Wiant of the Associated Press. The general told the officer to give his pack to Buttercup. The little Chinese, who weighed about 110 pounds dripping wet, took the pack from the 200-pound officer. Buttercup was already carrying his own and the general's pack.

The party soon arrived at Kantau, where a forward unit of Seagrave's hospital was established in the jungle. The doctors were members of the Army Medical Corps who were assisted by a few of the Friends, some GIs, and the Burman nurses. They had been under periodic artillery fire, and the doctors complained that they couldn't make the nurses go into the dugout when the shells were landing. The doctors continued to operate during the shellings and the nurses refused to leave them.

Stilwell proceeded to the regimental command post, established about 300 yards from the area, where the Chinese and Japanese soldiers faced one another in the jungle, and was greeted by Colonel Li Hung. Li probably was the best of the Chinese regimental commanders, but, like the rest, had to be prodded from time to time. Stilwell was the one who had to do the prodding, and he did it by his mere physical presence rather than by any

rough talk or orders. Under the Chinese system Li was responsible for Stilwell's personal safety so long as the general was in his area. Should anything happen to Stilwell, Li stood an excellent chance of being executed. Under these circumstances Stilwell's periodic visits were not necessarily received with rejoicing by the local Chinese commanders, Stilwell knew this, and had a persistent and quite effective habit of remaining as a guest of the Chinese until they attacked or deployed as he desired.

In this particular case the general remained one day and two nights, until the Chinese were able to liquidate the opposition. During the second night the Japanese counterattacked from their positions 300 yards away, and a break-through certainly would have imperiled Stilwell's life. Had the Japanese known of his proximity they might have succeeded. Stilwell did not leave his dugout during the shooting, and his only comment in the morning was about a huge scorpion which had shared the hole with him. The general said he watched it for a long time and was impressed by a sort of green phosphorescent light the insect carried in its tail.

Various incidents took place during the stay and are reported, not because they are important, but because they were characteristic of Stilwell visits. In the first place, Li invited the general into his diminutive lean-to and served him tea in tiny Chinese cups. They went over the maps, and the general discussed the situation with him in Chinese. Li displayed some captured Japanese arms, and happily posed for pictures with the general. More than any other humans Chinese love to pose for pictures. That night Stilwell was Li's guest at dinner and was shown his dugout. The rest of Stilwell's party was sleeping in jungle hammocks at the bottom of a shallow draw under Stilwell. One American liaison radio team was there. This was a group of young GIs who lived under a canvas tarpaulin propped against the bank and cooked their own meals. They had no comforts of any kind. Stilwell's followers sat under the tarpaulin talking to these soldiers when an elderly man in a Chinese officer's cap moved in and sat down quietly. It was The Boss. In the dim candlelight the Gls failed to recognize him immediately and when they did they were undecided what to do. One of them broke the ice by asking the general if he would like some coffee. They were boiling it in an old can. "Believe I would," the general said. He was handed a canteen cup of the steaming beverage and a package of K-ration biscuits. Another

soldier diffidently passed a large can of issue hard candy, and Stilwell asked them how they were getting along. “Fine,” one of the soldiers said; “but Brooklyn would look pretty good right now.” The general chuckled, and said that Carmel would seem nice, too, for a change. He wondered how his giant schnauzer was getting along. One word led to another, until everybody was swapping stories in an enthusiastic bull session that went on for the better part of three hours.

The following morning Stilwell’s party rolled its packs and prepared to depart. Stilwell came down into the draw. “Ready?” he asked. He turned and started walking up the draw in the direction of the enemy. Those with him thought this odd but followed close behind. Stilwell turned to the right and straddled a bore-hole latrine. “Can’t I have any privacy any place?” he growled in mock anger as he started to unfasten his belt.

Climbing up to Li’s headquarters, the general was present when a Japanese prisoner was brought in. The prisoner had minor wounds but was in good physical condition. He was obviously terrified. He sat on the ground directing short, ceremonial bows at everybody, and suddenly saw the general. With a great, hopeful, toothy grin he stuck his hand out to the general. Stilwell recoiled as though he had been struck. “Not with you, you bastard," the general snarled, his face flushing. Chinese soldiers gave the Japanese cigarettes for posing for pictures and Stilwell did question the Japanese a moment in Japanese. He could speak a little of the language. The prisoner was placed under guard and hustled back to the 22d Division headquarters. Later Stilwell asked Liao about the prisoner, and Liao replied sadly: “We are sorry, but he seems to have bled to death.” The Chinese couldn’t see any sense in keeping prisoners. They had to be fed.

Stilwell was suspicious of all Japanese, including the Nisei, until he had the latter under his own command in the 7th Division. His admiration for them developed until he made his famous statement about Nisei persecution in the United States. On Okinawa in October 1945 Stilwell told Sergeant Fred Friendly, field correspondent for the CBI Roundup:

“You’re damned right those Nisei boys have a place in the American heart —now and forever. I say we soldiers ought to form a pickax club to protect the Japanese-Americans who fought with us in this war. Yes, sir, a pickax

club. Any time we see any bar-fly commando picking on any of these kids or in any way discriminating against them we ought to bang him over the head with a pickax, and I'm willing to be a charter member of such a club."

While Stilwell remained Li's guest the Chinese killed about 125 Japanese, captured twenty-two rifles, two light machine guns and one knee mortar, and cleared the area. Such was the effect of Stilwell's presence. The Boss returned to his headquarters satisfied.

He was satisfied in general with the campaign but he needed important victories and needed them bad. He needed them for publicity and political as well as military reasons. The AXIOM party had gone to Washington. He knew full well the AXIOM people would argue that his own campaign was impossible and doomed to failure. The following is a summary of his remarks to a visiting War Department officer, who knew little about the picture in Asia:

The British have always claimed they were going back to Burma. That fit in with our plans, so we tried to work with them. In every conference and every plan we agreed we were here to reopen communications with China. In all these plans, this slot, this rat hole in which we are now fighting was assigned to the Chinese because the British quite naturally were not going to pick out the worst locality to work in themselves. Also we are at the end of the railway line which enables them easily to control rolling stock, so as to supply fully their own operations. They are sitting pretty.

Last October the 38th Division was given a mission to come in and secure this area. They started scattering themselves all over the valley, got their units surrounded, sat down and dug in. They got themselves in a hell of a mess. After a couple of unfortunate ambushes they just sat down and yelled for air support and air supply. While I was in Cairo I got a radio that the Chinese were behaving badly. I hurried back to Chungking for a couple of days and came right down here. I found things in a hell of a mess. For instance, a Chinese battalion had dug in and sat down around Taro for three months doing nothing.

Finally we knocked the hinge out at Yupbang Ga, but the failure of the battalion at Taro had permitted the Japanese to reinforce. We had about nine

small actions, one serious, along the Tanai River. It was very slow. The 114th Infantry did a good job at Yupbang. The 113th cleared the Tanai east of the Tarung River, while the 112th has been idle. Because of casualties I decided to bring in the 2nd Division. I hope to get to Yawngbaung Ga and Lakyen Ga tomorrow. Then we move directly on Maingkwan. The 22d is doing well. The 38th is good but suffers sometimes from lack of confidence. Like all Chinese, they find it hard to believe that they can really beat the Japanese if they go after them.

If the British would attack and I had one American division I would guarantee to open the road to China this dry season. The command setup is funny. Mountbatten is the Supremo. I am his number-one stooge. Giffard is in command of ground forces and Slim commands the Fourteenth Army. The chain should run from Supremo to me to Giffard to Slim. For this operation, however, I'm under the Fourteenth Army. That's all right. Slim is a good man. He doesn't bother me.

The trouble with the Indian Army is that they never organize it into divisions. They have only sixteen divisions while they have 300,000 men on duty to keep down internal disturbances—policemen. They have 400,000 more in fixed garrisons. They could have been selective in their army and had 400,000 good fighting men in their divisions.

We command the sea and the air. The British have four divisions on the Arakan and four at Imphal. All but two on the Arakan are inactive. Mountbatten says he hasn't enough stuff. When he first came out here he was snorting fire and brimstone and wanted to fight. He really wanted to fight. He said the monsoon wasn't going to bother him. He has been unable to withstand the pressure on him and now he doesn't want to fight without very extensive preparation. The British on the Arakan outnumber the Japanese three to one but get no place. Their position is as bad as it was last year. Why don't they build an airfield where they are? They can dominate Rangoon, Toungoo, and the Japanese airfields in Central Burma from where they are. Instead they keep battering their heads against the Japanese in an effort to get Akyab while Slim has to beg the Ministry of War [India Government] even for replacements for his battle casualties.

I'm satisfied these Chinese have developed the offensive spirit. They have had thirty actions and only got their noses bumped in three of them. There are no glaring inefficiencies in junior officers. They are doing a damn good job. Regarding a third Chinese division [the xyzth]. One regiment is ready at Ramgarh now and will be moved soon. Another will be ready by April. We will never get the third regiment. Last May I was promised faithfully a full division by the Chinese Minister of War [Ho Ying-chin]. That's a sample of what goes on in Chungking. We started this training program on an agreement that if we furnished equipment and training personnel they would furnish an unlimited supply of manpower. What you see is the net result.

I believe the British have no serious offensive intentions in this theater and I am trying to advance far enough with this handful of troops to force them into action. I'll say this for the Gimo. He has kept his hands off this operation. I've never heard from him, which is unique in history.

Stilwell, as stated in the summary of remarks with the staff officer, had sent two battalions out on flanking missions to capture Lakyen and Yawngbaung. To get there the Chinese had to proceed through enemy lines and, in places, cut their own trails through the impenetrable jungle. This was a highly important maneuver, as it would permit the two battalions to turn east and get behind the Japanese at Maingkwan. But the battalions got lost and sat down. Stilwell, who planned to put the Marauders into action at Maingkwan, was desperately anxious for this operation to proceed without a hitch. A spectacular victory would further embarrass the AXIOM party, in addition to having critical military value. Stilwell probably was more interested in AXIOM. He was so anxious to trim that party that he had sent a group of his own staff officers to Washington ahead of AXIOM to nullify AXIOM arguments.

With the two key battalions bogged down in the jungle, Stilwell became restive and decided to do something about it. He literally took Liao by the scruff of the neck and started to find them. To do so he was forced to travel about ten miles behind Japanese lines—a trip not considered customary for a lieutenant general. He refused to take any newspapermen or staff officers with him with the exception of his bodyguard, his aide, and McCabe, who

was on an inspection visit. He said he did not wish to embarrass the Chinese battalion commanders, when they were in trouble by the presence of newspapermen. Young, the aide, said the main reason was to keep the party small to avoid enemy detection.

Stilwell walked back into camp that night exhausted. Staff officers, who had worried greatly about the possibilities of something drastic happening to The Boss, helped the almost staggering members of his bodyguard off with their packs. McCabe could scarcely stand. They had walked over terrible terrain as fast as Stilwell could force them to travel. “It almost got the Old Man this time," McCabe said. “He turned around once while we were walking up a terrible grade and told me, "If I had on a pack I'd fall down on the trail." First time I ever heard The Boss admit he was in trouble.”

This incident illustrated the extent to which Stilwell would drive himself and those closest to him to achieve his ends, It was also one of the many examples of rare personal bravery. Another illustration of his complete lack of personal fear occurred a few days before.

Stilwell was leading his “Irregulars” up the trail, en route to his headquarters from the visit with Colonel Li. The Japanese often searched the trail with artillery fire in the hope of hitting pack trains moving in either direction. There was no observation. An officer walking directly behind Stilwell heard a swooshing sound similar to that made by a ricebird, common in the jungle. “Is that one of those ricebirds?” he asked Jim Brown, walking behind, just as the shell exploded much too close. Stilwell looked over his shoulder with a broad grin and said: "Pretty close, huh?” Then a concentration of shells began falling all around the party. Dirt and debris were thrown over everybody. Men who lay flat on the trail were lifted into the air by the concussion. Through it all Stilwell’s calm voice could be heard: “Keep low. Keep moving. There is a draw ahead.” He led his band into the draw and then walked back to hurry stragglers. When he had accounted for all of them, he sat down and calmly lit a cigarette. His people were very frightened, which seems to be the fashion when under artillery bombardment. He patted one of the correspondents on the head and told him to relax. “Everything will be all right," he chuckled. Probably

Stilwell was as close to death at that time as he ever would be and escape. Shells landed within ten yards of him, but he was saved by one of his greatest enemies—mud. The seventy-fives buried themselves in the soft earth and detonated straight up instead of horizontally. It was a close call.

Early rains were falling, which complicated Stilwell's plans. Jungle showers, though short, are so intense that dirt roads turn to quagmires, making the movement of artillery and ammunition trains virtually impossible. The combination of the "lost battalions" (straightened out and sent on their way by Stilwell), AXIOM, and the rains had Stilwell in an edgy mood. He was irritable and short. He was hard to live with. But those who suffered most from his jabs felt sorry for him one morning when he came to breakfast after an all-night rain. He looked terrible. "I lay awake all night listening to the rain," he said bitterly. "Every drop hurt me.

"

What would develop in the immediate future hung on the Marauders, who had started coming into the Hukawng Valley the last week of February 1944. They were a tough bunch, mad at the world. A munificent War Department had loaded them down with every gadget known to military science, including individual Kohler stoves. It was fine equipment. Stilwell knew that transportation of all this stuff on foot would destroy their primary threat—speed. The men didn't want it all but just couldn't decide what to keep.

Merrill asked Stilwell for authority to march the men from Ledo to their jump-off area near Ningbyen, a distance of about 130 miles over the precipitous Patkai Mountains and through the mud of the rains. The men piled up excess or unwanted equipment in bivouac areas where it was picked up by trucks. They were disgusted because of unfamiliarity with the peculiarities of mules, shortage of men caused by lack of replacements, and because of the grueling march.

Stilwell went up to inspect the first two battalions. He loved them. He had American troops at last, even though they numbered only three battalions, plus a few pack troops, signal detachments, and military police. The first battalion was the only one wise to combat, having fought in the Southwest

Pacific, but the others looked just as tough. On his return Stilwell's driver was forced to back the jeep off the trail to permit passage of the third battalion coming in. Stilwell wore a field jacket without rank insignia, a Chinese officer's cap, and held his carbine between his knees. The top was down, and The Boss looked like an old sportsman out for a hunt. After their march the Marauders in particular hated anybody on wheels. One muleskinner stopped his animal directly in front of The Boss and stared at Stilwell in disgust. "Christ," the nauseated soldier said, hands on hips, "a God-damned duck hunter." Back at his camp the general roared with laughter. "I'm sure glad they're fighting on my side," he said.

The Marauders were sore at Mountbatten. While they were staging in Ledo he had paid them an inspection visit. His aides arrived a day in advance and informed Merrill that the admiral "would simply have to have a bathtub." Bathtubs are not plentiful in the jungles of Assam, but some tricky Marauder dogrobbers found one. Lord Louis may have gotten a bath, but he never lived it down with the American soldiers.

The Japanese 18th Division was defending stubbornly and with customary defensive efficiency. Enemy troops had to be dug out of every position almost by hand during any kind of frontal action. To avoid the heavy casualties consequent to such combat the general maneuvered his troops in such a way that he avoided butting heads with the Japanese as far as possible. The main line of defense ran down the Japanese Mogaung-Shingbwiyang Road. Stilwell kept a company or a battalion moving down the road to "keep their teeth in the Japanese," and maneuvered other Chinese units around one or both flanks in close envelopments, which put Chinese behind the defending units at the completion of each move. These were classic tactics and effective enough so that an enemy less stubborn and fanatical than the Japanese would have become demoralized. Stilwell was doing to the Japanese what the Japanese had done to the British in 1942. During that campaign the British were faced constantly with a situation where flanking forces got behind them, forcing them to fight their way through road blocks to the rear to escape annihilation. Defensive warfare against such tactics is costly, as the Japanese were at long last discovering to their own sorrow.

Attrition was cutting them down until the enemy was forced to start moving the 55th Division into the line to reinforce the 18th. This was a new experience in the lives of the 18th Division troops, who had routed the British at Singapore and through Burma in 1942. By constantly popping up in their rear, Stilwell's forces prevented the Japanese from saving many of their wounded, while the American medical service was such that more than 95 percent of Chinese battle casualties were being saved, many to be put back into the line. The Chinese were receiving air support as effective as such support can be in jungle warfare, where targets are almost invisible.

Stilwell kept hitting the Japanese from every side in order to keep them from getting set. He constantly kept them off balance and in perpetual ferment. The Japanese just couldn't believe Chinese troops could fight like this. Everything was aimed at the capture of Maingkwan, the largest village in the Hukawng Valley. Its capture was not only important politically and from the standpoint of publicity, it was of supreme importance in that the general hoped to trap a large part of the 18th Division. To accomplish this he planned to use everything he had. The 22d Division was to continue frontally down the road and around the right flank. The Marauders were to get their baptism by sweeping wide around the left flank to strike north and south of Wallawbum, just south of Maingkwan. The 38th was scheduled to turn the left flank by cutting around in a tight arc to hit the enemy's flank and rear. Just to make sure everything went all right Stilwell had moved a Chinese tank corps into the area which also was scheduled to circle the left flank.

This tank corps was the only Chinese subordinate unit under the direct command of an American. Colonel Rothwell Brown, who organized and trained the tankers, retained actual command in the field, rather than assuming the position of a liaison officer like the Americans with the other Chinese combat units. It was conceded that the tanks were to be used before they were ready. Chinese tank drivers, by and large, had been peasants and coolies from Yunnan. They had never driven any kind of motor vehicle, and had had only about three months' training. Adding to the complications was the nature of the jungle and terrain. To take the tanks around the flank would require the cutting of about ten miles of trail to reach an open area where the tanks could be deployed against the enemy. Machine guns and

Chinese riflemen were mounted on a huge bulldozer and the American driver started cutting the trail around the Japanese flank with every possibility of being intercepted by Japanese patrols. The tanks, a few with American drivers, followed. Some betting odds favored prompt liquidation of the tanks under the circumstances.

The Marauders, stripped of their impedimenta after the long hike, and trained to scalpel sharpness, started their move. They kicked off on February 24, 1944. Their attitude was exemplified in the following sentence spotted by a censor in a soldier's letter home: "My pack is on my back, my gun is oiled and loaded. As I walk into the shadow of death I fear no sonofabitch."

On February 25, 1944, Corporal Werner Katz of New York City, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War's International Brigade and Guadalcanal, became the first American infantryman to kill an enemy soldier on the continent of Asia in World War II. Katz was a scout. He met the Japanese infantryman at the turn of a trail and the enemy soldier made the mistake of trying to lure the New Yorker into an ambush. Katz riddled him with his Tommy gun. Enemy bullets grazed the American's nose and cheek. The Marauders were several days yet from their objective.

On February 24, the day Merrill took off, Stilwell reviewed the situation to the war correspondents. Although the general, by his personal visit, had straightened out the Chinese lost battalions, he was still not sure of the situation around Lakyen and Yaungbawng but felt "we are two days late" in efforts to trap two Japanese battalions in the area. "After this is cleared up," he said, "we will start moving on Maingkwan by the main road and trail. We will go as far as possible, clean out outposts and preliminary opposition. The tanks are over the river, which is a great relief. I don't know if we will be able to use them in this country. I hope so.

"The Chinese are now within ten miles of Maingkwan by road. [He made no mention of the Marauders, whose movements were strictly top secret.] Our fighter planes are concentrating on Maingkwan and Mogaung, hitting bridges, etc, to keep out and divert Jap traffic. Air support in the jungle is relatively ineffective because the pilots can't see anything. The air corps, however, has forced the Japanese to make all troop movements at night,

which has been a help. Don't pan the air force. This is damned hard going. All the pilots can see are treetops.

.... "Louis is coming up to see us. Have to get a bathtub. I'd like to get him out in the jungle for a little walking but I guess he leaves that for Wingate...."

On February 29 Stilwell had a close shave. He was standing on the road with Colonel Carleton Smith, chief liaison officer with the 22d Division, and Liao. They were talking to a Chinese company commander moving down on Maingkwan. Three American P-51s strafed the exact spot a few moments after the general had departed. The company commander was killed and six Chinese soldiers wounded. The spot was twelve miles behind the bomb line, illustrating the difficulty that pilots were experiencing in locating their targets.

As Stilwell was moving on Maingkwan to fight his first really major battle the British were sitting motionless at Imphal. Wingate was about to be flown to North Central Burma by Colonel Philip Cochran's American Air Commandos. On the Arakan, however, the British got into trouble. A large force of Japanese got behind the British 7th Division in much the same way they had the year before. It looked like the end of the 7th, but this time it was different. Stilwell discussed it and other things at a press conference on March 3. "I saw Slim yesterday," he said. "Slim said the 7th Division had prepared all-around defenses and the people in the command post knew what to do and where to go. The Japanese broke into the command post four times and were run out four times. The British counted 1,100 dead Japanese. Slim says the Japanese came in with from 8,000 to 8,500 men and he claims the British killed 4,000. Slim is a good hombre. He now expects to go ahead on the Arakan. The gliders will get off as scheduled, and, if successful, may keep the Japanese from reinforcing here, which is all to the good. I told Slim I expected Wingate to fight. No shadow-boxing."

Discussing his own immediate prospects, the general said: "Three companies of tanks got off at 7 a.m. There are a total of sixty tanks. They are supposed to get in among the enemy artillery. They have their tails up." He reported on the moves of various regiments, all of which, he said, were doing pretty well except one Chinese outfit. In typical Stilwellese he said:

“.... the 64th has been sitting on its behind doing nothing and reporting fictitious Jap counterattacks....” Stilwell said Merrill should hit around Wallawbum by noon, and hoped to wipe out two Japanese battalions. Stilwell had received a report that the Japanese had gotten out of Maingkwan the night before. “If the Japanese got out,” he said, “it was a damned smart move. We keep getting confirmation that the Japanese know every God-damned thing we are doing. It is a damn fine intelligence. The Japanese are doing a fine job. All in all, our operation is doing better than I expected. You can’t take a half-baked, relatively untrained outfit and expect too much against a smart veteran outfit like this Japanese 18th Division.... ”

Merrill hit the road around Wallawbum twenty minutes behind schedule on March 3. His first report stated: “We have received no casualties and we already have taught the enemy to respect us....” On the same day the Japanese ambushed the green tankers and their untried Chinese supporting infantry and shot them up pretty badly. The 22d Division was converging steadily on Maingkwan and the tanks were regrouped and passed under Merrill’s operational control for greater coordination. “The tanks have been having their troubles,” Stilwell said, “and we will see what they can do. Brown has given up trying to cut his way through the jungle and has taken to the trails. The jungle is still dense..... Training for the tanks has been sketchy, and we called them up early. From what one officer has told me, I judge they kept their tails up and did some good fighting in spite of everything. It was their first engagement and also the first for the battalion of infantry that went in with them.... Everything is going successfully so far, but you never know what will happen tomorrow in this business. Imagine—there are only foreigners, Americans, and Chinese, really fighting to retake a part of the British Empire. Thats a hot one....”

The Chinese got patrols into Maingkwan on the fifth. Merrill got into Wallawbum but was driven out temporarily. Soldiers of the 38th Division moved in and fought shoulder to shoulder with the Marauders. As some of the Marauders were coming out the incoming Chinese, mistaking them for Japanese in the fog, ambushed the Americans. The Marauders deployed and wounded ten Chinese without an American casualty—the old story of poor Chinese rifle marksmanship. The Marauders regretted the incident deeply, and the Americans carried their wounded Chinese comrades to tiny liaison

planes, landing in the rice paddies to evacuate wounded. The Marauders insisted on the evacuation of all Chinese casualties ahead of their own.

The area had been cleared and the battle won by March 7 when Mountbatten arrived to view the battlefield. The first phase in the reoccupation of North Burma was over. Perhaps the best recapitulation of what had happened and what it meant is contained in the following report, prepared for Stilwell's signature by a staff officer, and forwarded to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek on March 13:

Subject: A Report on Chinese-American progress to reopen land communications with China.

To: Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek

.

With the collapse of the Japanese in the Maingkwan-Wallawbum sector, it has become apparent that the Hukawng Valley will soon be ours. The enemy has now lost 3,500 known dead, approximately 1,500 square miles of Burma territory, and our steady advance has carried us 150 miles across the Burma border from India.

Thus the first step in our campaign almost has been reached. We have been slightly behind schedule, but schedules mean little in warfare waged over terrain and in jungle that long since would have stopped men less resolute than ours. In this land even the elements often conspire against us.

In the Maingkwan—Wallawbum action Chinese and Americans for the first time in history fought and died side by side against the common enemy. They won the decision after a series of small bloody actions that all fit together into a common strategy. The 22d Chinese Division struck frontally and swept around the west flank to hit the enemy from the rear. The 38th Chinese Division swung in a tight arc around the east flank, attacking the enemy's flank and rear. The American provisional regiment made a wide flanking movement to the east, striking the Japanese on the road both north and south of Wallawbum. This last action split his forces and prevented needed reinforcements from coming up from Jambu Bum. The Chinese tank

corps also swung east, encountered two Jap battalions, pulled back to strike our 22d Division on its left flank, engaged these enemy forces and so disrupted them that they were unable to carry out their primary mission against our troops. The tanks later entered Wallawbum.

It was after our forces were thus deployed that they systematically slaughtered the entrapped Japanese. Our troops killed 2,000 Japanese in this sector alone. Japanese wounded must have been correspondingly greater.

The Chinese tank corps in particular covered itself with glory in this operation. Not too much was expected of them, as they are not seasoned troops, veterans of many battles and possessors of a mechanical heritage. They are green men in the military sense, and many of them have come from China's paddy fields to drive a motor-driven vehicle for the first time in their lives. Mixed with them were American officers and enlisted men, also facing their first combat, who fought with tanks and helped with maintenance.

On the evening of March 3 the third company of the tanks, surrounded by ten-foot-tall elephant grass, ran into the middle of the two enemy battalions. Chinese infantry, also facing its first action, was moving with the tanks as a protective force. Enemy phosphorous shells set the grass on fire and our troops were then subjected to concentrated artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire for most of the remainder of the night. Despite inexperience and the inevitable blunders attached to initial actions, our forces deployed, sought the enemy, engaged him and killed over twenty-two of his number before daybreak. We lost ten Chinese and three Americans killed, thirty Chinese and nine Americans wounded.

After this the tanks proceeded on their mission, shooting up enemy columns and artillery and rolled into Wallawbum by themselves on the afternoon of March 8. In addition to the casualties already mentioned, we lost three American tanks. We suffered no further casualties. The tanks and supporting infantry killed about 500 Japanese in addition to spreading consternation throughout enemy positions wherever they operated. It represented a series of actions that would have done credit to a seasoned unit and was especially meritorious considering the amount of training and other preparation that had gone into this group.

The territory we have taken has been recaptured from the enemy at relatively light cost to us in casualties. The cost in American effort behind the lines, however, has been great. We should realize that there are over 50,000 Americans devoting themselves to the construction of the Ledo Road which is being built to reopen land communications with China and, at the same time, serves as a supply link for these troops who fight ahead in order that the road construction may proceed. There are other thousands of Americans who handle the training of the Chinese troops and who operate a supply line to these same Chinese—the longest supply line in the world, almost 15,000 miles back to the United States. Many more Americans handle administrative duties required by this operation in places like Calcutta, Bombay, and New Delhi.

The fight for the Hukawng Valley has not been a simple operation. It has not been a case of casually picking up two Chinese divisions, a tank corps, an American regiment and an American air force, giving them a mission and forgetting about them. It has been a case of long training, long and painstaking planning, the assembling of our relatively meager supplies and matériel, of assembling these resources at strategic points, of constructing a great road, called impossible by the British, of mustering and sometimes diverting air units to aid in supply, of air coordination to provide the planes and pilots for supporting missions, of establishing a medical corps to handle wounded and mitigate against diseases prevalent in the jungle, of providing special arms and equipment, of arranging for the efficient flow of replacements. In short, it meant the assembling of all available American resources to insure that Chinese troops would be fed, supplied, and cared for to the maximum. This has been no small task. Take the medical corps, for instance.

It has been necessary to ship hundreds of medical personnel from the United States to handle adequately Chinese sick and wounded. The British said we would suffer at least 35 percent casualties from malaria in the Assam—North Burma area. British troops in the Imphal sector have suffered as high as 50 percent casualties from the disease. Yet the highest malaria rate among the Chinese for any one month was 10 percent. Normal months showed an incidence of 6-7 percent, and recurrences have been kept to the minimum. In order to do this, it was necessary to employ some of the

most able men in American medicine. to act as malariologists. Medical and United States Public Health units were spread throughout the area, working to establish physical facilities for malaria control, train in and enforce malaria discipline.

The evacuation of wounded presented problems peculiar to this area. Long before the campaign was ever launched it was realized that new and different techniques of evacuation would have to be developed in order to combat terrain, poor communications, and adverse weather. We arrived at a basic policy of getting wounded into hospitals in minimum time, with minimum shock and discomfort.

With this in mind, the following system has been developed. When a Chinese soldier is wounded he is picked up by Chinese litter bearers and moved straight through the jungle to a Chinese regimental first-aid station or to some nearby road where he can be loaded in an ambulance and driven to a regimental first-aid station. After treatment, ambulances carry the wounded farther to the rear, where they are admitted into American field hospitals. In the case of impassable roads, special litter-bearing jeeps are used to transport wounded. Following examination and sometimes emergency surgery, the most serious cases are returned to base hospitals farther to the rear. Evacuation to base or general hospitals is handled by air with transport ambulance planes and small, individual liaison planes the transport media.

This system has resulted in prompt medical attention in all cases and has kept the ratio of death from wounds down to 3.5 percent. This is an amazing figure when you consider the nature of the roads in forward areas, the difficulty of maintaining levels of necessary drugs and blood plasma, and the lack of medical tradition in the Chinese Army. There are Chinese soldiers fighting in the line today who have been wounded two and three times.

All this planning and preparation have been necessary to insure that a Chinese-American striking force would have maximum help in clearing the way for the Ledo Road —a gigantic engineering endeavor to reopen land communications with China. The British said this road was impossible. They pointed to 4,000-foot mountain passes, the jungle, the malaria, the

monsoon. Despite such official pessimism, the road progresses hard on the heels of the advancing troops.

A total of 80,000 men have helped with the construction of the Ledo Road. Fifty thousand were and are Americans, the remainder are composed of Chinese engineers and Indian coolies. Building this road has been far different from constructing a highway across plains or even through normal mountain country. Besides cutting inch by inch through the jungle, the road has been so constructed that it will withstand the inevitable torrents of the monsoon and still carry heavy tonnage. It is now a two-lane metaled highway, twice the width of the Burma Road. This has required enormous amounts of gravel, drainage construction with thirteen culverts to the mile, bridges by the score, cuts, fills, and all things necessary to an ordinary highway plus those made necessary by the character of the country. We have imported steel bridges and iron piping for the culverts all the way from the United States. One of our bridges over the Tarung is 1,100 feet long. All this graveling, laying of culverts, and bridges are necessitated by an annual precipitation of 140 inches in the area.

Units working on the road have now cut about 180 miles through the jungle. Of this, practically 113 is complete and the best record was fifty-four miles in fifty-seven days.

Maintenance crews have done excellent work—so excellent that tractors often go 2,000 hours with only minor breakdowns; an almost unbelievable figure when you consider the work, the country, and the weather.

The road, with sections unfinished, construction proceeding and constant maintenance, is handling 20,000 tons a month. When complete it will undoubtedly support 60,000 tons monthly in China.

Because of the road being incomplete it has been necessary to supply the Chinese combat troops by air. Two full Chinese divisions have received practically their entire supply of food and ammunition by air drops. Rice is free-dropped, while ammunition is floated down by parachute into jungle paddies directly behind the front lines. The supplies and ammunition are picked up under American supervision and allocated to the designated Chinese units.

From the dropping fields these stores and ammunition go to the forward troops in trucks, jeeps, on horses and mules, and on the backs of members of the Chinese Labor Corps. This Chinese Army has never run out of supplies.

The pilots and dropping crews are American. Many have lost their lives in plane crashes because often they have had to proceed to their objectives through almost prohibitive flying weather in order to get the Chinese what they needed when they needed it. Their air-dropping technique, pioneered in this theater, made the current operation possible. Later the road will release many of those planes for operations elsewhere.

The Chinese have been furnished with every type of modern American Army transportation. They have the finest American trucks, reconnaissance cars, jeeps, and weapons carriers. Behind them are similar vehicles, operated by Americans, shoving supplies and equipment up to the fighting front. Mixed with the Chinese are Americans aiding them and maintaining their vehicles when the Chinese need help. Where wheeled vehicles won't operate the Chinese have been furnished horse and mule pack trains. American veterinaries circulate the combat areas tending to the illnesses of the animals.

The Japanese are on their way to defeat. They have been beaten and sometimes routed in these first battles. The Japanese are tough, wily fighters, well equipped and well supplied from their interior lines of communication, but the Chinese and Americans are proving to be their masters. The efforts of our fighting men in the front lines would have been in vain, however, had it not been for the army of Americans in the rear who have planned for them, administered for them, and supplied them with what they needed to fight their way back to China and eventually Japan.

J.W. Strmwetyi

Le Cen. Usex

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Triumph

On MARCH 6, 1944, Mountbatten descended on Stilwell's jungle in style. The Boss drove back to Taihpa Ga airfield to meet him. Senior staff officers, correspondents, and photographers added up to a fairly impressive welcoming committee. Being used to Stilwell arrivals, where the general's bucket-seated C-47 would come in alone, the crowd looked curiously into the sky when it heard the roar of many engines. What was this? "Uncle Joe's Chariot" always flew alone. Suddenly Mountbatten's "Hapgift" (so named because it was fitted luxuriously and presented to the admiral by Hap Arnold) zoomed over the surrounding mountains, led by a sixteen-plane fighter escort flying in formation. This was something new and different.

A correspondent approached the gray-haired man in the battered uniform and the Chinese officer's cap and said: "Say, General, you better start using fighter escorts when you travel."

"I'm just adding up the barrels of aviation gasoline," Stilwell chuckled with a faraway look in his eyes. "Mountbatten's party is using enough to keep my campaign going for a week."

Lord Louis stepped from his ship and he and Stilwell shook hands cordially. The admiral was magnificent. He was dressed in a tropical tan naval uniform, complete with three full rows of decorations. The bill of his cap flashed with gold. Big, well-built, dark, a person of amazing personal charm, Lord Louis seemed to dwarf into insignificance the little man in the canvas leggings who always carried a carbine over his shoulder. Here were two men as different in every respect as two men could be.

Stilwell guided Mountbatten to the front seat of his jeep and hopped like a squirrel into the back, jealously holding his gun. Corporal Windam Braud, Stilwell's unreconstructed rebel driver from the swamps of Louisiana, gave Mountbatten a deliberate once-over and turned to the general. By his

expression and tone of voice Braud indicated that Mountbatten might be pretty hot stuff but there were no flies on his beloved Uncle Joe. “Ya'll ready, gen’l?” he asked. Stilwell, visibly amused and enjoying all the fuss, indicated that he was.

Braud led off to the Northern Combat Area Command headquarters at Taihpa. Although Stilwell maintained his personal headquarters about twenty-five miles forward from NCAG, his main staff functioned in the vicinity of the airport. Stilwell had ordered a formation in order that Lord Louis might make a speech. The admiral liked that. Wherever he went soldiers were lined up so that Mountbatten could address them. Stilwell led Mountbatten to the top of a mound over a dugout and introduced his commanding officer to the gathering of GIs, officers, and a few of Seagrave’s nurses. Seagrave sternly forbade the girls to wear their GI trousers, shoes, and shirts, and they were colorful soberly standing there in the jungle dressed in their best longyis and white shirtwaists. The British admiral spoke pleasantly, briefly, and in generalities. He seemed apologetic and on the defensive when he said that there would be no real military campaign worthy of the name in CBI until after Germany was defeated. That was old stuff to an audience who had heard the same thing over and over again in inspired broadcasts from BBC and All-India Radio. Mountbatten hurried through and seemed to be apprehensive lest someone ask why his forces at Imphal sat instead of advancing through the Chin Hills to the Chindwin. Referring to Wingate’s forces, the admiral said that the British soon would be helping the Chinese and Americans clean up North Burma. After the defeat of Germany, he said, the combined British and American fleets would be turned against Japan and the war would be over in short order.

After the speech Stilwell took him down to his lonely forward headquarters where The Boss lived in a tiny bamboo basha with a food-dropping parachute for a roof. It had a dirt floor, a camp cot, boxes, parachute dropping pillows for seats, and one small folding table. American signal corps installations had provided electric lights for the general and the 22d Division staff sections with whom he lived.

Stilwell hopped into the back of the jeep and Mountbatten, as self-conscious as a small boy, asked the reluctant Corporal Braud if he could drive. “If the gen’l says so,” said Braud, looking at Stilwell apprehensively. Braud not only loved the “gen’l’s” jeep, he was financially responsible for it in that he had signed the memorandum receipt on which it was issued. Mountbatten may have been a great sea captain, but as a jeep driver he should have stood on the bridge of a destroyer. As he drove down the road that was little more than a track, stalling on grades, killing the engine, and meticulously hitting every rut and bump, Braud writhed in anguish on the front seat. Never one to hide his light in a clump of bamboo, Braud testily advised the admiral on the technique of jeep driving. When Mountbatten stalled on one of the short but precipitous grades Braud would say: “Yu gotta kick huh in the fanny, suh. Yu gotta shift down tu thet thea low geah and highball.” Braud reached the end of his tether when the rearview mirror fell off. “Hold it, Adm’al, hold it!’ he shouted. ““Ah done signed fo’ this heah jeep, and Ah gotta pay fo’ thet mirrah. Stop this thing so Ah can git it.” Stilwell sat in the back rocking with silent mirth. After the conference Mountbatten drove the jeep back to Taihpa. Somebody asked Braud how he did, “As usual,” said the corporal in supreme disgust.

The rains had stopped and the road was three inches deep in white, powdery dust. Stilwell and the admiral looked as though they wore masks when they hiked the last 200 yards deep into the jungle where The Boss had his basha. Buttercup was beside himself fussing around his two high-ranking charges. Young issued stern orders that nobody was to violate Stilwell’s private latrine during the admiral’s visit. Correspondents and some staff officers had learned that they could sometimes get remarkably frank pieces of information from Stilwell by joining him of a morning, seemingly by accident, in his rustic place of meditation. Unfortunately Stilwell was too deep in the jungle to get the admiral a bathtub. The only one around was a portable canvas affair in which the gigantic Colonel Carleton Smith splashed himself a couple of times a week. Smith met hints that he should lend his beloved tub to Mountbatten with a resistance that almost amounted to hostility.

That night assembled war correspondents asked for a press conference. Mountbatten, like all British commanders, was forbidden to give such

conferences unless a text of what was to be said had been approved in advance by the War Cabinet. The press, accustomed to frequent and informal briefings, serious conferences, and social bull sessions with The Boss, was particularly insistent that Mountbatten at least meet them off the record. Stilwell urged the admiral to do so. Mountbatten had complained to The Boss that as far as the world press was concerned Stilwell was the only person in SEAC fighting a war. This, he said, was embarrassing to him. Stilwell certainly was feeling sorry for the admiral that night and, warmed by his personal affection for the Britisher, wanted to do something for him. Stilwell felt Lord Louis's personal charm was such that he could create for himself an aura of good fellowship, at least, by sitting down for a chat with the correspondents. Members of the press were all American except one Indian and, in general, were willing to give Lord Louis the benefit of the doubt on many things.

With great reluctance Mountbatten agreed finally to an off-the-record session. The newspapermen crowded into Stilwell's basha. Stilwell sat unobtrusively in the background, with Mountbatten on the one and only chair in the center of the small dwelling. Elaborately he explained how he was forbidden by Winston Churchill to give any such conference and how he hoped, in fact insisted, that anything said at the conference would not leak out. He was terribly ill at ease. He promptly made a great mistake, one common with British officials, by deviating from facts. One can do a lot with newspapermen by being frank whether or not the truth hurts. That was especially true of this gang, weaned on Stilwell's sometimes brutal frankness, and used to a situation wherein no question was taboo. These men knew the military situation about as well as the commanders. They were hard to fool.

The conference started amiably enough, and the correspondents, without open question, accepted the standard British line about "exterior" as opposed to "interior" lines of communication and "lack of resources," the official alibi for no activity. Then Frank Moraes, representing The Times of India, and the best of all the Indian war correspondents, started asking pointed questions about lower-command level British leadership on the Arakan. Poor leadership, tactics, and training had resulted in heavy casualties among Indian troops. This was meat for an Indian correspondent.

Mountbatten, instead of being candid or admitting he was in ignorance, tried to refute the implications contained in the questions by answers which were ambiguous. In each case Moraes, who had spent considerable time on the Arakan and knew what he was talking about, would make the admiral look bad with icy courtesy. Finally Mountbatten became so flustered that he threw up his hands and told Moraes to conduct the conference "because you know more about the Arakan than I do." Moraes probably did at that because he had spent considerable time on the Arakan reporting the battles. Stilwell realized that the conference was going from bad to worse and broke it up to save Lord Louis further embarrassment.

The whole question of press and Public Relations was s ticking in both Stilwell's and Mountbatten's craws. The British had hoped that Mountbatten's presence would steal publicity thunder from Stilwell, but The Boss had sunk the admiral. Mountbatten was particularly disturbed about an article which had appeared in the February 14, 1944, issue of Time. This article said, among other things: "For the first time hints of friction in Southeast Asia had been spoken out loud. Admiral the Lord Louis Mountbatten differs from Stilwell...." The piece then quoted remarks Stilwell was supposed to have made to "his critics" at a Mountbatten staff meeting. Lord Louis was sincerely interested in promoting harmony within his command. Publicity of this kind, he felt, was particularly destructive to cooperation and injurious to morale. Stilwell was equally anxious to suppress any hint of his troubles and was worried about the article because of his orders from Marshall to "get along." In addition he admitted that the remarks attributed to him had almost verbatim accuracy and had been made in a very top secret staff meeting. He was worried about the source of the leak. So was Marshall. Members of Stilwell's "anti-AXIOM" group in Washington were called in and grilled minutely and individually by one of the top generals of Marshall's Operations Division. The leak was never discovered.

Mountbatten told The Boss he was most anxious to unify and harmonize his command. He cited the CBI Roundup as one factor preventing this. "The Roundup," Mountbatten said, "not once has mentioned British fighting on the Arakan." This was true. It was a retaliatory measure taken against the British after they had refused for weeks to permit any mention of early

Chinese successes in moving from Tagap to Shingbwiyang. The British simply weren't going to permit any news of Chinese offensive activity in Burma until they had to do so. Major General Cawthorn, director of Intelligence for India Command, said: "The Japanese do not know the Chinese are in the area, therefore the news must be suppressed as a security measure." The lack of Japanese knowledge seemed odd when they were fighting small engagements with the Chinese almost every day.

Stilwell countered by stating that British attempts to capitalize on Chinese-American successes and to steal credit were enraging every American in the theater. As a particular recent example he handed the admiral a newspaper clipping, the contents of which had been broadcast over BBC and heard by most of the Americans in the jungle. The story quoted a speech in Commons by Mr. Herbert Morrison. "I should like also," he was reported to have said, "to call attention to the magnificent work performed by the tea planters of Assam in making the mountain track from Assam into Burma into the present first-class metaled road which can now take three lanes of traffic and without which our army in Northern Burma would be in grave peril and danger...." Normally reliable reports said that General Pick did an outside loop and made a crash landing off his jeep when he heard the broadcast. The planters had done everything conceivable to keep the Americans out of Assam because their presence required bases which damaged the tea plantations. Stilwell agreed to direct the editor of the Roundup to play the Arakan campaign strictly on its merits as news, and Mountbatten admitted that the Morrison story "was most unfortunate" and said he would "signal London" to avoid such things in the future.

Mountbatten then told Stilwell that he was planning an Allied photo magazine to be published weekly. The Roundup was the official newspaper for American troops and SEAC, a four-page daily, published by smart, honest Frank Owen, once the youngest managing editor on Fleet Street, was the Roundup's British counterpart. The admiral wanted this photo magazine to be distributed to both British and American forces. He wanted it to cover all phases of the command and to be edited both by British and Americans to promote harmony and good will between the two commands. Although CBI was badly in need of people with adequate newspaper or magazine backgrounds, Stilwell immediately told his jungle Public Relations officer

to arrange for the diversion from his command of necessary personnel to assist on the magazine. Being afraid that this magazine would follow the traditional British party line on Southeast Asia operations, the officer suggested that Stilwell insist on joint British-American control of editorial policy before any Americans were put on the staff. “No,” Stilwell replied. “Mountbatten wants help on this and we'll give it to him. No strings attached.”

The two commanders then started to discuss the daily SEAC communiqué. Upon arrival in CBI, Mountbatten had insisted on the elimination of the CBI practice of different groups issuing separate communiqués. He said all land, sea, and air official announcements should be consolidated into one combined communiqué issued by his headquarters and carrying his dateline. Stilwell, anxious in all ways to be co-operative, relinquished without question control of his basic news announcements. This was of great importance in a command which had distinguished itself in the past by doing most of its fighting against the enemy in the columns of newspapers and in radio broadcasts. Stilwell would never have made such a radical departure from his original insistence on preserving the integrity of his news releases without being somewhat sold on the proposition that, under Mountbatten, SEAC was to become a brave, reformed, and dynamic command.

As Stilwell listened night after night to BBC quoting verbatim SEAC communiqués he realized his mistake. There was always lots of stuff on the Arakan, but the Chinese were getting definitely third billing. There was a way to get around this because, in drafting the communiqué agreement, one of Stilwell’s Public Relations officers had inserted a joker. He had insisted, first, that material for the Chinese-American section of the communiqué must originate at NCAC and be used as sent without editing; second, NCAC could issue a supplementary press note, carrying a Stilwell dateline, which would be released simultaneously from Mountbatten’s headquarters, NCAC, and by the Chinese military spokesman in Chungking. It was explained that Stilwell was bound by an agreement with the Chinese Ministry of Information, wherein he would furnish information about Chinese military activities in Burma to broadcast to the Chinese people, and the Ministry agreed to use only material sent by Stilwell. This, it was

explained, was to keep announcements of Chinese combat factual and out of the realm of fiction—customary habitat for official Chinese military announcements. Nobody bothered to tell the British that Aimerican correspondents could pick up the announcements and file them from Chungking, safe from British censorship which, in the last analysis, could control Stilwell press notes filed from India or Burma. The British promptly ignored the agreement to use NCAC textual material in the communiqué verbatim and in full. Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté, Mountbatten's deputy chief of staff for civil affairs and public information, had his orders, and was doing what he was supposed to do. A former air chief marshal and commander of the Coastal Command in Britain, Joubert had direct, personal, and secret orders from Churchill on the conduct of propaganda and Public Relations. His instructions called for public announcements that would make the world believe that Britain was fighting tooth and nail in the Orient. Joubert controlled all publicity and propaganda information, and a sidelight on the extent to which he went to build up native respect for the British at the expense of the Americans was demonstrated by the Office of Strategic Services. The OSS monitored all British propaganda broadcasts in native vernacular. From June, when the Allies landed in Normandy, until October, at least, SEAC propaganda broadcasts to French Indo-China and Thailand failed to mention once that Americans had landed in Europe. The forces were British, imperial, and "Allied," according to the broadcasts.

AXIOM ended the honeymoon so far as Stilwell was concerned, so he did not stop his Public Relations people when they started taking measures to nullify Joubert's tactics. Stilwell needed lots of effective publicity on his victories to aid his anti-AXIOM party in Washington. Things were arranged. Communiqué material and press notes were sent to Mountbatten's headquarters as usual, but the press note was given to war correspondents considerably before it was filed to Mountbatten for release. At the same time faster radio facilities from Chungking permitted the press note filed there to reach both America and England before the communiqué and the press note filed from Mountbatten's Delhi headquarters. The press note, being nothing more than an elaboration of the communiqué material, had a tendency to kill that part of the SEAC communiqué pertaining to the Chinese when it hit England, and to American wire editors, long suffering

from British communiqués, it was something to use in lieu of the whole SEAC communiqué. Consequently, all that Britain was getting in the American press was an occasional war correspondent's story about the Arakan, and a pretty good play when they got a licking. In London, Stilwell's forces were getting so much publicity from the press note that the British Ministry of Information radioed Mountbatten and told him sharply to correct a "false impression" that Stilwell was doing all the fighting. Mountbatten had the high-priced talent in his press department, but Stilwell had a couple of officers who knew the old newspaper axiom that he who gets his news home first gets it in the paper.

While Mountbatten was complaining about Stilwell getting the lion's share of the publicity, Stilwell countered with a direct accusation that Joubert was playing down the Chinese-American effort in the communiqué and making British capital out of Chinese-American efforts. To these charges Lord Louis made a strange reply.

"It is true we play you down," he said, "but we do so because you are winning constantly. To emphasize always that you are winning tends to make the communiqué monotonous, so we leave you out sometimes." In other words, Stilwell should get himself licked in order to relieve the monotony and get in the communiqué.

The admiral agreed that his staff was wrong in deleting or editing Stilwell's communiqué material, and admitted that it was contrary to former agreements. He said he did not realize that in addition to the deletions British official announcements often tried to make British capital out of American and Chinese successes, and he felt sure that Air Marshal Joubert was acting without knowledge of the reaction his publicity and propaganda were bringing. He said that he wanted the whole thing harmonized and he would send Mr. Charles Eade to Burma to work out the details with Stilwell's Public Relations officer (the author of this book.)

Eade is a good illustration of how concerned the British War Cabinet had become over the state of their Public Relations in Southeast Asia. They had not only sent an air marshal, equivalent to an American lieutenant general, to head the department, but Churchill hand-picked Eade to bring some civilian journalistic savvy into the setup. Eade was the young editor of the

London Sunday Dispatch, one of those papers in the columns of which Churchill could do no wrong. In order to strengthen Eade's hand he was given the diplomatic rank of "personal representative of the Prime Minister" and a brevet military rank of major general. In the British Army, where ceremony and tradition rule, these kudos were important for things other than seating precedence at the banquet table. The Eade-Joubert combination presented a formidable phalanx of rank and precedence to put against American Public Relations which, in SEAC, was headed by a reserve lieutenant colonel and in CBI by a regular army colonel. The only trouble with this from the British point of view was the American disregard for rank. Americans took the attitude that they were representatives of the United States Government, hence not outranked by any foreigner. This was difficult for the British to understand.

At 6 a.m. on March 7 Stilwell and Liao took Mountbatten on a tour of the Maingkwan battlefield. The enemy had been slaughtered in a style never before seen in Burmaa. Liao was literally beside himself with Chinese pride. He butchered the King's English in broken flights of impassioned rhetoric which nobody possibly could understand. He took Mountbatten to heaps of the most stinking corpses, pointing them out like a miniature Genghis Khan surveying the rotting clay of what had been a poor adversary indeed, for all-conquering Chinese.

Liao's high-pitched voice rose to a screech occasionally as he opened special maps to show graphically how his troops had feinted here, thrust there, countered in another place, and finally cleared the enemy in a symphony of tactics, masterful in execution, revolutionary in concept. It was quite a sight. Stilwell said it was the funniest thing he ever heard in his life.

As Liao held the center of the stage, Mountbatten tried his best to keep from gagging at the awful stench. Stilwell, who had turned the whole show over to Liao, stood on the sidelines quaking with silent mirth. Mountbatten quietly said to an American officer that he much preferred the clean decks of a destroyer to the stench of the battlefield.

After the view of the carnage Mountbatten started back to Stilwell's basha. He drove, and Braud looked over his shoulder at Stilwell in agonized

supplication when the admiral killed the engine on a steep grade. Stilwell solemnly elevated crossed fingers for Braud to see and winked. Later the admiral drove back to Taihpa Ga, leaving Stilwell behind. He got too close to the side of the road once and a piece of bamboo cut a serious gash in one eyeball. “Ah told him tuh keep hisself in thu middle of thu road,” said Braud with a certain malicious satisfaction.

Judging by OWI monitoring reports, the Time story had kicked up a lot of dust in the world press and radio. The whole question of troubles in Southeast Asia was being aired thoroughly, with every third-rate pundit in the world seemingly getting in his two-bits worth. Ninety percent of them missed the point completely and went on at length about the “clash of personalities,” ignoring the basic factor—the clash of national interests. All this had Stilwell badly worried. He knew the publicity would be annoying to Marshall, who was too deeply involved in plans for the invasion to be bothered with a sideshow such as this. The general’s position was untenable. How could he get along and still protect the integrity of his mission? Was he supposed to sit back with sympathetic detachment while Mountbatten’s staff planned night and day to destroy what Stilwell had been ordered to do?

On Sunday night, March 5, Colonel Philip Cochran’s American Air Commandos started to fly Wingate’s four brigades into the triangle Mogaung, Katha, Bhamo. A fifth brigade had marched in over the Stilwell Road and skirted Stilwell’s forces on the west. The flight was daringly conceived and brilliantly executed. For the first time in military history a large force was to be moved behind enemy lines in gliders. They were to land in open places in the jungle called Broad- way, Piccadilly, and Chowringhee. The operation was called by the code name OPERATION THURSDAY.

First to land were American combat engineers, flown in to convert these clearings into airfields 150 miles behind Japanese lines. They were to establish the fields, await the arrival of the main forces, and retire. They all hoped that the British and Indians would get there ahead of the Japanese. Everybody was tense because they were flying over 7,000 foot mountains to land deep in the jungles with no light other than the moon. It was hard to

conceive an operation more hazardous. It was so dangerous that newspapermen, as brave as most people, added up the story value, balanced it against the risk, and decided to cover it from headquarters. Only Lieutenant Colonel James Warner Bellah, indomitable white-haired head of the American section of SEAC Public Relations, flew in to get the story for the scribblers. This burly, freckled American veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force in World War I took off in the second glider. He and an official photographer distinguished themselves over and over again with acts of great heroism during the landings.

Because of obstacles placed at the last minute on other fields, all gliders landed on Broadway. Wrecked glider piled on top of wrecked glider that first night in the jungle. The air was full of the screams of the injured and the dying, but the troops came in, held their ground, and deployed with a mission to become the second prong of a pincers around the Japanese facing Stilwell. This was the chance for LRP to prove itself. It was in sufficient strength and operating in conjunction with a strong invasion force.

By the middle of March the Marauders and the Chinese had run the Japanese out of the Hukawng Valley. There was rather heavy fighting at Jambu Bum, the bottleneck leading from the Hukawng to the Mogaung Valley where lay Kamaing, the capture of which would take Stilwell from under the Fourteenth Army and Eleventh Army Group. On his visit Mountbatten casually brought up the old agreement about the change in command channels after Kamaing, and suggested that the status quo be maintained. Stilwell refused to budge, insisting that the agreement be kept. There wasn't much Mountbatten could do about it but agree.

Early rains were falling again, turning the ungraded sections of the road into bottomless pools of mud. Jungles became marshes, and military operations that should have taken hours took days. A Marauder muleskinner looked at his beast, mired to its belly in mud. He removed the pack and told the animal to get up. It would not move. The soldier kicked it in the flanks and bellowed: "Get up, you sonofabitch, get up! You volunteered for this the same as I did." The Marauders were getting ready for more flanking movements. The Chinese were moving slowly down the road. The Chinese

generals, proud of their victories, were showing a tendency to rest on their laurels. Stilwell kept them going by delicately playing on their egos. When Sun would dog it he would disappear suddenly from the news. Liao would be the only Chinese fighting in the jungle. Then Sun would push his troops ahead and Liao would take his time. Liao would vanish, and Sun would be doing all the fighting in the press. These tactics had great effect on the Chinese generals. Army signal corps photographers made handsome posed and candid studies of the two generals. Stilwell would present these enlargements when the time was ripe. Chinese colonels received and gloried in like pictures. Sun and Liao each received a Legion of Merit for certain of their efforts in Burma in 1942. It was fascinating to watch Stilwell's private psychological warfare with his Chinese officers. He flattered them by his attention. He humiliated them by careful inattention. He made them fight by refusing to leave a danger area until they did. He taught them that they could not lie to him by personally inspecting troop dispositions and spurring his liaison officers to do the same.

But, all things considered, the Chinese were fighting well. No troops in Chinese military history had fought so well. With the Marauders used in what Stilwell called a series of left hooks, the Chinese moved faster. The Marauders made successive forced marches around the left flank to pop up suddenly in the enemy's rear, cutting off reinforcements and making untenable the position of Japanese facing the Chinese. They always had to get out and fight their way back through the Marauder road blocks, suffering a high percentage of casualties. The Chinese followed well and fought miraculously for "an irresponsible rabble."

Stilwell's expected show of temperament during periods of bad weather was equalized by reports from Washington that AXIOM had taken as sound a drubbing as the Japanese in the Hukawng Valley. Stilwell's tactics of sending his own mission ahead of AXIOM, without notifying Mountbatten, had brought an official protest from the admiral. Vinegar Joe apologized formally to his British commander. The general could afford to apologize. He had won another important political victory.

Meanwhile Charles Eade looked distinctly out of place in his rumpled gray suit and topee there in the heart of the jungle. He was met at the

Maingkwan airport by Stilwell's Public Relations officer on March 19. The American officer had asked The Boss for any special instructions before leaving his forward headquarters. "Nothing special," the general said. "Tell him the truth. Be frank. Don't pull any punches." Eade was a new kind of Britisher. There was no double talk. No fancy evasions on the high, spiritual level of Allied harmony. He stated at the outset that Britain had her back to the wall in the Far East with her prestige at its lowest ebb. His job, he said, was to correct that as far as possible through the medium of public expression. Correcting the situation by winning a few victories was a military responsibility on which he did not feel competent to comment. He said that he and Joubert would continue to run Public Relations in a way designed to make the most of a bad situation for the British because such were their orders from the Prime Minister himself. He indicated that Public Relations and propaganda policy came direct from Churchill and that he (Eade) and Joubert had the power to act as free agents without reference to Mountbatten if they liked.

The American was quite willing to concede that the British should be expected to do everything possible to rebuild their prestige in a colonial empire they intended to continue to dominate after the war, but in the interests of getting along and saving themselves from American sabotage, the British should figure out a line that would make British face without making it at American expense. For instance, he said, Mountbatten returns from Burma to Delhi and Joubert puts out a brief announcement that the admiral had been up in the jungle observing the execution of the plan he and Stilwell had worked out together. To the newspaper reader this was intended to mean that Mountbatten thought out the plan for the North Burma operation in conjunction with Stilwell. The plan had been conceived before Lord Louis was heard of in CBI, and the announcement made the Americans, already disgusted by British inactivity, very angry. Americans, Stilwell's PRO said, were left with little choice but retaliation.

Another case in point was the absurd public debate about who planned the Cochran landing. Joubert, without reference to the Americans, issued a long and laudatory handout on how Mountbatten had planned all the details of the operation. In a previous communiqué the air marshal had made the first announcement that airborne troops of the Fourteenth Army had made the

landings. For twenty-four hours, as far as the world knew, it was an all-British show. When Joubert credited Mountbatten with being the brains behind Phil Cochran's American Air Commandos it was a little too much for Lieutenant Colonel St. Clair McKelway and the late Major Bruce Pintér, Public Relations officers for the American Air Forces. They followed Joubert's announcement with a press note of their own which announced that the whole thing had been masterminded by Hap Arnold's staff in Washington. On successive days the world press had two official but absolutely contradictory statements on the source of the planning. Joubert capped the climax on the third day by issuing another official statement, in which it was said that both Mountbatten and Arnold had thought of the operation and worked it out. The man who really suggested the plan was ignored by both sides. His name was Wingate. Whatever tactical planning was done was the product of joint thinking by Wingate and Cochran. Those two dynamic and courageous officers must have been hurt to see a trail-blazing and gallant operation cheapened by a pillow fight to award credit to an admiral and a general who had nothing to do with it other than nod their heads.

Stilwell's representative at this conference with Eade pointed out some simple truths. He said that Americans throughout the theater were hostile to the British because they were refusing to fight in any strength and refusing to support wholeheartedly the directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. He said that no propaganda other than actual fighting would correct that. Under the circumstances Americans tended to have chips on their shoulders and were particularly sensitive to British efforts to horn in on Stilwell's operation which was the only going concern in SEAC. The British already were beating the drums on the theme that Wingate's Chindits were "making Stilwell's advance possible." This was particularly poisonous to Americans because a military novice would know it was much too early for the effects of Wingate's operation to be felt. The American, however, said that there would be no official American objection to anything the British said or did, so long as it did not either minimize Chinese-American efforts or attempt to pervert announcements of them to British purposes. He said that the British desire to recapture face was understandable, and a thing that the Americans officially detached from Britain's colonial problem would not hinder so long as it kept out of the United States-Chinese backyard. What was not

said by either side was that the British could not go to a world public with any argument supporting a theory they were contributing effectively to the war in SEAC without riding postilion to the Chinese-Americans. The smartest press agent in the world couldn't prove that the British were contributing much of anything with four divisions standing pat at Imphal and four more milling ineffectively around the Arakan. There is only one way to convince the public that you are winning a war. That is to get out of your holes and win it. All the modern propaganda in the world can be nullified when you aren't moving by one quick look at an old-fashioned map. Stilwell's people knew perfectly well that the British would never deviate from their line of how Wingate and the Arakan "diversion" were making Stilwell's campaign possible. Those were the only things the British had to sell, and they couldn't be sold on their merits as independent military operations. The Americans had little hope of being able to stop such British propaganda in the guise of news. However, they figured the British press agents were dumb enough so that the Americans could proceed with their policy of beating the British to the punch by shoving the press notes and spot news war correspondents' stories out ahead of official SEAC communiqués for some time to come. This was the time to bring every conceivable public pressure on the British. The best way to do it was to make them look very, very bad by comparison with Stilwell's pickup organization.

Eade stated that the press note and the war correspondents' stories must be held until after the release of the communiqué. He understood what was going on, but what he failed to understand was the interminable military procedure required in Mountbatten's headquarters to translate a wish into an order. In other words, British and Americans could conduct stately debate in person and by radio for weeks before a Mountbatten decision would become effective. The American, therefore, agreed when Eade suggested Stilwell send a "personal representative" to Kandy, Ceylon (where Mountbatten was about to move his headquarters). The move of the headquarters, the establishment of a new headquarters, the arguments, the debates up through the maze of levels on Mountbatten's staff, should be able to put off the day when Mountbatten would finally decide to order Stilwell to hold war correspondents' stories and his press note until after his communiqué had been issued. A Stilwell representative on the scene would

not only be able to delay such an eventuality, he might even be able to protect Stilwell in any agreement reached, and at the same time be present to hamstring Joubert in his activities wherever possible.

Stilwell agreed to send the PRO who had conferred with Eade to Kandy as his personal representative. The officer had a delicate mission. It was one of blocking British attempts to promote themselves at the expense of the Chinese and Americans, and do it in a manner wherein Stilwell would never be charged with failure to "get along." It might require tactics which, if discovered, would bring serious official repercussions, in which case the officer would have to stand alone and take it without yelling for help from Uncle Joe. Because of the War Department attitude on squabbles in SEAC this was a dangerous position in the military family.

Wedemeyer was still in Washington with the AXIOM party when Stilwell's representative arrived in Delhi. He, McKelway, and Brigadier General Ray Maddocks, chief of the American planners on the SEAC staff, sat down to plot a political campaign on the question of Public Relations. Although Maddocks claimed he knew little or nothing about the subject, he turned out to be one of the best operators in American interests in SEAC. There was no question ever on where he stood. Many times he said: "I am paid by the United States Government. I am looking after American interests. I tell this to the Supremo [Mountbatten] and everybody else." McKelway, a former managing editor of The New Yorker, was an adroit manipulator who was rarely caught off base. Stilwell's representative was the author of this book and the junior member of the trio. Maddocks suggested that offense was the best defense and recommended an attack to separate Public Relations from propaganda and civil affairs, on the ground that Americans could participate in the production of factual publicity on the efforts of the command but could not, because of United States policy, become associated with SEAC propaganda which, in the last analysis, was based on a philosophy of colonial rule and exploitation. Achievement of this objective would separate Public Relations from Joubert, which, to Maddocks, McKelway, and the writer meant a major victory. It would eliminate one of only two smart men in the British organization. Maddocks, incidentally, was deeply sincere in his fear of the consequences of becoming aligned with the British propaganda in Asia.

The three Americans met in conference with Joubert and Eade. The debate lasted an hour and never descended from the rarefied atmosphere of "the best interests" of the command as a whole. The Americans attacked and the British rolled, ducked, and parried. They did so well in the debate that the Americans just held their own which, as McKelway said, "wasn't so bad for a regular army officer, an old broken-down humorist, and an ex-police reporter butting heads with a couple of the Prime Minister's personal representatives." The meeting broke up with Joubert stating that he was about to go to London to meet Wedemeyer and would discuss the whole matter with him. Although the Americans were fearful of what a Wedemeyer, unfamiliar with the problem, might accept from the smooth Joubert, they were satisfied with achieving a delay in reaching a settlement on the press note which, in any case, would redound against Stilwell and the American Air Forces now commanded by Major General George E. Stratemeyer. Stratemeyer also headed the integrated 10th Air Force and RAF, known as the Eastern Air Command.

While the politicians maneuvered in the comforts of still cool Delhi, the people who were fighting the war were having some tough going and suffering dramatic tragedy. The Marauders, fighting as always without artillery, were getting into trouble in the jungles east of Shaduzup. Merrill, who had collapsed during the march out of Burma, suffered a severe heart attack on March 28 but refused to be evacuated. Lying on the ground of his command post, he directed operations until ordered out by Stilwell. Even with a Stilwell order the leader of the Marauders refused to leave until after all wounded had been evacuated. He was flown to the 20th General Hospital in Ledo on March 30 in serious condition. His command was assumed by Colonel Charles Hunter.

Wingate made his last flight on the night of March 24. He had completed a tour of his forward positions and was flying to India in an American B-25 which became lost in a storm. The ship crashed into the side of a mountain killing the entire party which consisted of Wingate, the crew, and two British newspapermen. He was succeeded by Major General W.D.A. Lentaigne, commander of one of the LRP brigades.

Wingate's death was greeted with sadness by Americans, who admired his intrepid singleness of purpose in insisting that British and Indian troops could defeat the Japanese in the jungle. Officially the British mourned his loss but in reality the British old guard was glad to be rid of an officer whose unorthodoxy had been a constant source of embarrassment. In a surprisingly candid analysis printed in Frank Owen's SEAC, hints were dropped that all had not been peaceful with Wingate. The following are excerpts from the publication printed in a later review of the Chindits:

Churchill was fascinated by his daring and powerful mind so well attuned to his own sense of challenge. Mountbatten took him to his heart, encouraged him and backed him to the limit, even when Wingate was being temperamentally awkward.

Wingate, it must be allowed, was one who did not joyfully suffer opposition. He drew down the lightning on his own head, alas, in the final, tragic sense, for he was killed in his hour of triumph, flying with characteristic defiance through a thunderstorm.

Was his 1943 expedition a success or not? Some critics held it achieved very little at a high cost.... Surely the proper way to assess Wingate's achievements in 1943 is to ask: Did it make possible his achievements in 1944?

Much more important and serious than the retirement of one leader and the death of another was the Japanese move on March 17, 1944, into the Manipur State to wipe out the British at Imphal and cut Stilwell's Assam—Bengal Railway line of communications. Without this railway Stilwell's military campaign would die of starvation, and the air freight line over The Hump was finished just as it was starting to produce something worth while.

The Japanese crossed the Chindwin at Homalin and at Thaungdut thirty miles south. They followed some of the same trails Stilwell had used on his retreat in 1942. These were trails the British said they could not use to advance against the Chindwin River barrier "because we cannot supply ourselves over them." The Japanese not only moved infantrymen to Imphal over these trails, but they moved tanks. They crossed into India and hit the

British on March 22. A third column, meanwhile, started moving up the Kabaw Valley. The 17th Division, the same that was battered to pieces in Burma during 1942, suddenly found itself cut off. The division had been garrisoning Tiddim, 164 miles south of Imphal. Japanese columns, moving with incredible rapidity, outflanked Ukhrul, one day's march for Stilwell from the Imphal Plain in 1942.

More enemy columns appeared around Kohima and along the Imphal—Kohima—Dimapur Road. The 14th Army was not only cut off from land supply, but advance elements of the Japanese once reached a point no more than thirty miles from the Assam—Bengal Railway. This was a desperate situation, one in which a British failure would end, for the predictable future, any possibility of Allied offensive action in Southeast Asia. Without the railway Stilwell was not only finished offensively but was left with a dubious choice of trying to fight his Chinese back through an enemy which could beat him to Assam, or try once again to escape over uncharted trails and jungles of the Himalayas to China. The British who, by their consistent refusal to act aggressively, had set themselves up for this attack, faced the prospect of annihilation of the four divisions garrisoning Imphal and the road to Tiddim. To lose these divisions would be a blow from which the British never could recover.

Stilwell, sitting in his jungle basha, watched the progress of this battle with increasing alarm. Everything he had been able to do during months of painful, frustrating planning, negotiation, and attack stood to be lost. He knew that once lost these things never could be regained. Hoping against hope, he continued with his campaign. The Chinese and the Marauders fought on while Lentaigne's brigades were deployed from Indaw to Hopin along the Mandalay—Mogaung Railway. Lentaigne's job was one of blocking supplies and reinforcements up the railway. His effectiveness was still an unknown quantity, but Stilwell hoped for the best. He was not optimistic about anything. He was dreadfully afraid that the British would be routed in the Manipur State because he assessed them on the basis of past performance. No American would have given a plugged nickel for British chances. Stilwell even diverted one Chinese regiment as forlorn protection for the railway in the danger area. In the depths of his worry he offered Slim the Chinese 38th Division.

India had been invaded, giving the Japanese, defeated on all other fronts, a fine propaganda peg once again. This propaganda was creating panic in India, where the British, as before, were multiplying distrust in their veracity by issuing vague, ambiguous, and often false statements. On April 8 Joubert announced: “It is obvious the enemy’s timetable has been thrown completely out of gear.... other than attacking the key towns and gaining full possession of the roads, the Japanese effort can now be of little else than nuisance value.” Trying to down native fears, the British indulged in the usual “we expected it all the time and are prepared to handle the situation” propaganda which convinced listeners of the worst. The British had to do something. To withdraw and abandon the Assam—Bengal LOC and Stilwell to their respective fates would draw world public criticism so violent that the old term “perfidious Albion" would appear a sugary diminutive by comparison. To withdraw to the Imphal Plain and hold would spell the end for four divisions of troops. These were mostly Indian, to be sure, but they represented a quarter of India’s combat strength. No supreme allied commander would be able to retain his job after a licking like that. So the British had to do something and do it quick.

Stilwell and Stratemeyer agreed to the immediate diversion of a large part of American air combat-cargo and troop-carrier resources to the support of the Fourteenth Army. These Americans combined with the RAF to fly immediately two divisions from the Arakan to Imphal. They flew men, mules, and artillery. All they left were trucks and tractors. It was a brilliant move under horribly adverse conditions. At the same time the British started moving the 33d Corps clear across India to relieve the small, battered garrison at Kohima. Slim, who had vivid memories of what can happen to a defender whose troops are dispersed, ordered the 17th Division to extricate itself from Tiddim and get back to Imphal. In carrying out its orders the 17th was being cut up to an extent reminiscent of 1942, so Slim sent the 23d Division south to help. The two divisions got back although badly reduced by casualties.

As the Japanese attack developed, Kohima appeared to be the key. This formerly beautiful village, sitting on the heights between Imphal and Dimapur, was defended by only 3,500 British and Indian troops when a Japanese division cut escape routes in either direction along the Imphal-

Dimapur Road. Slim, who did a masterful job of preparing and executing the defense of the Imphal—Kohima area, had misjudged in this one instance. He did not expect an attack in force on Kohima. Should the Japanese take the town, it would probably spell the end for all the defenders in the entire area. The Japanese started the siege of the town. It was tense. Mountbatten flew to Imphal and spent considerable time with Slim. But this campaign was different from 1942. The British had to win this one, and Slim was turned loose for the first time of his military career in SEAC. Remembering the civilians of Burma 1942, Slim evacuated more than 50,000 civilians and other non-essentials when the campaign opened. The 50,000 represented that many less who had to be fed, who would interfere with military operations, and possibly indulge in fifth-column activity.

Slim consolidated his forces at Kohima and on the Imphal Plain, forcing the Japanese to come to him, and refused to be tricked into sending out small detachments here and there to engage individual enemy formations. He ordered the 3,500 men of Kohima to hold to the last man, if necessary, to deny the Japanese this bridgehead to India until the 5th and 7th divisions, flown from the Arakan, could fight their way through from Imphal. These divisions were to hold until relieved by the 33d Corps, crossing India by rail. For forty days these British and Indian troops withstood the siege, after which the 33d Corps drove toward Imphal and joined with the 4th Corps. During all this the predominantly American Air Forces had done a fantastic job of flying everything, including drinking water, to the besieged troops at Imphal and Kohima. They flew in monsoon weather of the worst sort. Certain areas around Kohima receive 300 annual inches of rainfall. They never quit and seldom complained about supplying the British. The British were fighting at last.

The British were not only fighting, they were fighting intelligently. They had actually sent an infantry brigade in a swoop, strangely reminiscent of the Marauders, to cut off the big enemy supply base at Ukruhl. The British attacked the strong Japanese force at Bishnapur on the road to Tiddim with curtains of artillery. Japanese retreat was made perilous by fighter and bomber sweeps until the roadway became a hallway of death and destruction. The Japanese, now out of supplies, were being defeated at

every turn. They were being beaten by British and Indian arms, but even more were they being slaughtered by the monsoon.

The Japanese had gambled on a lightning thrust that would carry them to Assam before the British could do anything about it. It was brilliant strategy, and might have been successful, had it been started two weeks or a month earlier. To have done so might have put them in a position to fight it out to the end, without the weather joining the British as an ally. The rains came and cut the Japanese off from their supplies before they could reach Assam. They had no aircraft to supply them by air. American and RAF cargo ships managed to deliver cargoes to the defenders almost every day, despite weather.

Although Slim's troops did the greatest fighting ever conducted by British and Indians in SEAC, before and after, the monsoon was the deciding factor.

The last of the invaders quit India on August 25, according to British official records. Mountbatten claimed that 40,000 of them had died. The figure seems high, but it is possible. The Japanese had gambled because they were unable to stop Stilwell's march south through the Hukawng and Mogaung valleys. They decided to attack the British and get behind Stilwell in Assam. Stilwell, through indirection, had achieved one of his primary missions—to force the British to fight. By his aggressiveness he had forced the Japanese to attack the British, sitting safely west of the Chindwin River, and they, in turn, were forced to fight to avoid destruction. That they fought well, even though the battle was forced upon them, is to their eternal credit.

During the months of Slim's battle in the Manipur State Stilwell's Chinese continued to push to the south. The Marauders continued to deliver their left hooks in support of the Chinese, but the rain was beginning to slow operations by making troop movement more difficult. Merrill had returned from the hospital, where he had browbeaten the doctors into letting him out. He convinced Stilwell that he was in good shape.

Stilwell's timetable was behind schedule, although he never ceased advancing. His directive to capture Myitkyina looked impossible of attainment to most Americans. He did not even have Mogaung, so how

could he get Myitkyina before the monsoons made the whole country a steaming lake? He must get Myitkyina. This village was the key to the campaign. It was of great strategic importance as a base for the ATC. Its capture would mean that the ATC could abandon the extremely hazardous northern route over The Hump and fly the lower mountains from Myitkyina. Gasoline could be flown directly from the Myitkyina pipelines to Kunming. The capture of the town also meant that a fighter base could be established to protect the entire Hump run for the first time in its history.

Stilwell and Merrill worked out a plan to combine the Marauders with Chinese infantry regiments and some Chinese artillery into three combat teams. This force would be pulled north from its present position to the east of Shaduzup, and marched over the 6,100 foot Naura Hyket Pass to Ritpong, north from Myitkyina. This was the most daring plan of the campaign, and a huge gamble, with the rains already falling and the full monsoon just around the corner. Kachin Rangers said that the soldiers would be unable to cross the pass on foot unless the weather was dry. The grade was too precipitous. Merrill and Stilwell decided to try it, and Merrill so informed his staff in the depths of the jungle on April 27. Stilwell flew in that day in a Cub. He often flew miles behind enemy lines to talk with Merrill, or Merrill flew to Shaduzup to talk with him.

The tactical plan called for two combat teams to strike against Myitkyina while the third covered and screened the movement. The strategic plan called for another Chinese division to be flown over The Hump to Assam, and then flown in gliders to the Myitkyina air strip after it had been secured. by the combat teams. Stilwell had managed to bring enough pressure on the Chinese to get another division. The first Marauder combat team, known as the K Force, took off on April 28 under the command of Colonel Henry L. Kinnison, Jr. From the official Marauder diary, kept successively by Major John M. Jones and Captain Clancy Topp, and from conversations with survivors, what happened after that can be understood.

It was raining intermittently and the trails were in bad shape. The men were weary and showing the effects of weeks of combat and living on necessarily meager rations. By May 1, second anniversary of the start of Stilwell's retreat from Burma, Kinnison's force had reached the top of the Naura

Hyket Pass. Kachins had insisted that Americans and Chinese could not cross the pass except in dry weather because the climb was too steep. They said that animals could not be gotten over in any case. The troops got themselves and most of their animals over by literally cutting steps 6,100 feet up the side of the mountains. Cursing and slipping and sliding in the ankle-deep mud, soldiers carried the packs of their animals on their own backs. Some of the horses and mules slipped over precipices to their death. The climb unquestionably took a lot out of both men and animals. The second combat team, H Force, under Hunter, started up the climb the day K hit the top. M Force, the third combat team, had not moved as yet. On May 3 Stilwell flew to Merrill's headquarters at Naubum for a conference. On that day K hit 150 enemy troops dug in near Salawng-Hkayang. K liquidated the force with practically none escaping and moved on to Ritpong May 6. The rains continued, and animal casualties became high. Merrill notified Stilwell by radio that he believed H would hit the objective on schedule despite difficulties. M, which had had several small fights, was moving after the others, in good shape

.

Fighter bombers set up the attack on Ritpong. What Japanese troops were left after the air attack were killed to the last man. Kinnison reported that his Chinese regiment fought well, although taking more casualties than the Americans. Rains came again, bringing bad radio communications. Merrill flew to Shaduzup on May g to talk with Stilwell. The general asked Merrill where his forces were. "I'd be either a liar or a magician if I told you where they are or what happened today," Merrill replied. H by-passed Ritpong and moved south to Arang in the direction of Myitkyina. It reached Arang on the evening of May 10.

Merrill flew in to see Hunter on May 11. He found that Americans were showing up regularly with typhus. The Marauders had gotten into a locality infested with mite typhus, from which many died and many more had to be evacuated. Kinnison was among those who died. Forty-one American casualties from various causes were evacuated from Arang on May 12, with seventy-nine more to be moved. That is rough for a combat team composed of one American battalion, already under strength, and a Chinese regiment.

K took over the combat with the Japanese on May 13, releasing H to proceed, relatively unimpeded, toward Myitkyina. Weather and trails were improving. M was directed to hurry in an attempt to join H. On May 13 Merrill radioed Stilwell: ".... can stop this show up to noon tomorrow... if you think too much gamble. Personal opinion... we have fair chance and should try."

On May 14 Merrill radioed a forty-eight-hour alert to Stilwell on the attack at Myitkyina. He ordered M to remain at Arang because exhaustion of the men was such that they were finding it almost impossible to concentrate their forces. He ordered K to proceed forward to support H. K already had had considerable combat, various kinds of casualties, and was nearly exhausted. Merrill radioed Stilwell a twenty-four-hour alert on May 15. On May 16 Stilwell radioed Merrill: 'Looks like we are going into the ninth inning with the score 0-0. You are the first batter." Merrill replied: "Your message appreciated by me and all others. Hope to fill the bases for you. Importance of this last inning appreciated and we will not pull a "Casey at the Bat."

At 10:30 a.m., May 17, Hunter radioed that he was attacking the Myitkyina air strip. Merrill immediately took off in a Cub to watch the attack. One of Hunter's American battalions was down to an effective strength of ten officers and 200 enlisted men. Merrill flew to Shaduzup from Myitkyina as soon as the field was captured to see The Boss about the fly-in of the Chinese. Hunter radioed that he had captured the air strip at eleven fifty-six, and was consolidating and digging in for expected counterattacks. Shortly thereafter he flashed the code phrase: "Cafeteria lunch," the signal that the field was ready for the gliders.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kandy's Dandy

There is an old revivalist song which says that Ceylon is a place "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." Stilwell's dramatic capture of the Myitkyina air strip was not the signal for universal rejoicing among men in Kandy, capital of Ceylon and the seat of Mountbatten's headquarters. Flag-waving was confined to the American contingent. America's press and radio were licking their lips over the odious comparison between Stilwell's brilliant advance and what appeared to be British fumbling in the Manipur State. Although the British were beginning to fight well around Imphal and Kohima, they were in the untenable position vis-a-vis public opinion of not going any place by fighting defensively and suffering from the sins of their predecessors. Stilwell, that rustic knight, ignored the threat to his rear, and with audacity never before seen in Burmaa seemed to have almost opened the road to China in one massive stride. Under these circumstances Americans in Kandy might be forgiven for being smug and rubbing in Stilwell's victory wherever possible. Illustrative of the United States attitude is the following parody of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin." This song, called "Oh, What a Wonderful Theater," was conceived by Major Bruce Pintér, but written largely by Preston Grover and Peggy Durdin, two war correspondents:

Oh, it's fine to be fighting for Empire,

Oh, it's fine to be freeing the people,

We're freeing the people but never mind when

In the meantime we all can shack up with the WRN.

Oh, we fight in botanical gardens,

In the luscious botanical gardens.

Our sailors maneuver in whisky and tea

But that doesn’t matter, they're always at sea.

Oh, SEAC is racy and bracy.

Yes, its tempo is bracy and racy,

Its foxholes extend from New York to Land’s End

But its rear echelon is the place to defend.

Oh, we’re thinking of fighting in Burma,

Oh, how pleasant to think about Burma

.

When MacArthur and Nimitz have killed the last Jap

We'll take back all Burma without a mishap.

Dear old Singapore lies in the distance,

At a safe and respectable distance.

We've planned how we'll take it, it’s all on the map,

But we hope if we wait it will fall in our lap.

Oh, we’re planning combined operations.

How we treasure combined operations.

The Limeys make policy, Yanks fight the Jap

,

And one geis its Empire, and one takes the rap.

Oh, hush there's a sound in the gardens.

Oh, what is that sound in the gardens?

It's me loving you and it's you loving me.

Oh, God save the Queen, and oh, say can you see.

CHORUS

Oh, what a wonderful theater,

Oh, what a fabulous place.

We love political warfare

We don't fight; we just save face.

The British, on the other hand, would have been less than human to have fully enjoyed the position in which they now found themselves. The SEAC command had been caught with its pants down. In fact the planners were working on a scheme to "aid" Stilwell in the capture of Myitkyina as late as May 15, two days before the actual capture of the airstrip. At a Supreme Allied Commander's meeting Wheeler interrupted discussion of the plan to suggest "if you don't hurry, current events will overtake future planning." Wheeler knew what was coming but told the British nothing. A British officer stated that Myitkyina should not be taken at all "because it cannot be held." Brigadier General Thomas S. Timberman, head of Stilwell's liaison group with SEAC, countered dryly, "I don't know about that, but I do know we'll never be sure unless we do take it."

The announcement of the assault on the airstrip came with such unexpected suddenness that neither Mountbatten nor Churchill was able to prepare any confidential "guidance" for press and radio until the story had started to peter out. This brought a sharp radio from the Prime Minister, asking Mountbatten for an explanation of why London had not been "warned." The admiral was very angry and declared at a Supreme Allied Commander's meeting that Stilwell had deceived him. "When I saw him last in Burma he

told me he would take Mogaung first. Then he turns around and takes Myitkyina without warning me. Why was I not informed?" The Supremo then went on to suggest a directive which would prohibit Stilwell from advancing beyond points to be specified without prior authority from Mountbatten.

There is no doubt but what Stilwell did not want SEAC to know of his move in advance, even though he had orders to capture the village. Hence, he bought no space in the papers to advertise, but kept himself clean on the record by plotting the progress of his move on Myitkyina in routine daily situation reports sent by radio to Kandy, which were placed on the war map. The maneuver took twenty-one days and Timberman and Wheeler realized what was up more than a week before the objective was reached by the simple expedient of studying the situation reports. Knowing as well as Vinegar Joe the danger that such knowledge might cause the British at least to attempt to stop the Marauder combat teams on grounds such as being "unable to hold Myitkyina," the two American generals kept quiet. If Mountbatten didn't realize what was transpiring he had only himself and his British senior officers to blame. The information was available in his headquarters every day.

Joubert and Mountbatten got together and tried to save what they could for the British as soon as possible. On May 18 Joubert met with resident correspondents and briefed them. Without being too obvious he blew down the victory as far as possible, and introduced Lentaigne's Chindits into the picture. Some of his remarks, lifted from the transcript, marked secret, follow:

We have had some rather exciting news this morning. I don't think the most sanguine of us had thought we would be in Myitkyina so soon. I think the general impression. was that we would be very lucky if we got Kamaing.....

What we can say at the moment is that we have reached a good defense position from which further operations can be undertaken.... The chief point that must be borne in mind is that at the moment we must not look for any spectacular advance south through Burma.... I think its main significance lies in denying the Japanese the opportunity to attack "The Hump" traffic....

I should like to pay the warmest possible tribute to General Stilwell .... and also to General Wingate's, now General Lentaigne's, forces who have undoubtedly produced a situation which has enabled General Stilwell to take full advantage of the position. There is also a further point of course—that the Japanese initiative in Imphal caused so large a portion of his troops to wage long and unfruitful battle that, except for some detachments from eastern Burma, the original 18th Japanese Division in North Burma has not, as far as we know, received reinforcements....

Facts of the matter are that the 18th received steady reinforcements against Stilwell, including reinforcement of their Myitkyina garrison up the Irrawaddy River, despite one Chindit brigade supposedly blocking them south of the town.

On May 22 Joubert tried again. He prepared for publication an order of the day from Mountbatten to Stilwell. This document was written in great secrecy after a preliminary draft had been furnished by Timberman and rejected. Preparing such a document for publication, without reference to the Americans, was a violation of Public Relations agreements in force. The order read:

By the boldness of your leadership, backed by the courage and endurance of your American and Chinese troops, you have taken the enemy completely by surprise and achieved a most outstanding success by seizing the Myitkyina airfield. The crossing of the 6,100-foot Naura Hyket Pass is a feat which will live in military history. Please convey my personal congratulations and thanks to all ranks, including General Lentaigne's forces who are now under your command and who have been severing Japanese communications between Myitkyina and the south.

The "guidance" which accompanied the order read:

1. The issue of this Order of the Day once again emphasizes the unity of the Burma Front. General Stilwell's success was made possible by a coordinated plan and by the cooperation of the British forces with the Chinese-American forces under General Stilwell's personal command.

2. The Chindit operation had as its main aim the disruption of those Japanese communications in North Burma that supplied the enemy troops opposed to General Stilwell. General Lentaigne's troops have achieved what they set out to do, thus have had their share in General Stilwell's success. They are now under his direct command.

This might be a good time to summarize the Chindit contribution before and after the Order of the Day. In the first place, the various brigades wandered around, creating minor irritation in the enemy rear, but doing no serious damage. The basic philosophy of LRP is to hit and run. Back in the jungles of Burma Stilwell told Slim that he expected the Chindits to "fight. No shadowboxing." By "shadowboxing" Stilwell meant the hit-run tactics. Stilwell wanted the Chindits to put a lock on the Japanese rear, blocking the movement of reinforcements and supplies, and to keep the Japanese retreating in front of him from escaping. This meant the establishment of road and trail blocks in strength, and holding these blocks for considerable lengths of time. Such tactics would cause considerable British casualties. Everybody knew that. But without such tactics Stilwell felt that Lentaigne's forces would be nothing but a liability, in that they would accomplish nothing concrete, while being a drain on Stilwell's air supply line which had to keep them in food and ammunition.

As far as the writer knows, the first open conflict between Stilwell and Lentaigne occurred around the last of May. Stilwell ordered Lentaigne to establish a strong road block at Hopin, south of Mogaung, with a primary objective of denying escape routes to Japanese retreating before the Chinese. He told him to establish the block and hold it. Lentaigne complained by radio direct to Giffard. Stilwell had not gotten out from under the Eleventh Army Group as yet, so Giffard directed Stilwell not to keep the Chindits on the road block beyond May 31. Stilwell replied that he could not tolerate such interference with his tactical plans and told Giffard to take the Chindits out from under his command. In the face of what might have amounted to an international crisis, Giffard withdrew his order.

The Chindits, however, either couldn't or were unwilling to hold the road block, and pulled out on May 27. Stilwell curtly informed Mountbatten of the fact and asked him for a British parachute battalion to help relieve the

situation. (While insisting that they lacked the resources in men to stage land offensives, the British insisted on keeping considerable numbers of troops in training as parachutists when few considered there was any possibility they would be used as such. Stilwell wanted this battalion as infantry.) If the battalion is not available, Stilwell said, what help was Mountbatten prepared to send? The radio was forwarded to Giffard, who replied, "None." (The British already had promised Stilwell the 36th Division, less one brigade, by July 1. They would give nothing more.)

At about the same time Mountbatten received a radio from General Sir Henry Pownall, his chief of staff on a mission in London, in which the general said: "I have informed the British Chiefs of Staff that Lentaigne's LRPs are of no particular value. I told them we expected a 15 percent dividend but got only 5 percent."

After the Chindits had been pushed out of their road block south of Mogaung, Stilwell ordered one column to make a reconnaissance in force and attack Mogaung. He ordered a similar movement for another brigade. Neither order was carried out.

Stilwell acquainted Mountbatten with these facts about June 4 and said he would follow his radio with a detailed, formal report. He asked Mountbatten to relieve him of command of the Chindits immediately and promised to "continue to supply them and afford them every means of getting out of the area." Mountbatten was very much upset and asked Stilwell to delay any action until Slim had time to make an investigation of the charges. Slim investigated and reported Stilwell 100 percent correct. Slim reported further that Stilwell would keep the Chindits, as Lentaigne was giving indications that he would obey orders in the future.

By the latter part of July Timberman had been sent to Chungking to strengthen Stilwell's hand there, and Merrill, who at Myitkyina had suffered another heart attack, had replaced Timberman as Stilwell's chief liaison officer in Kandy. At this time Stilwell again reported troubles with Lentaigne. Specifically he reported fifteen acts of disobedience, and announced that he had sent his inspector general into the field to get sworn statements from all concerned to be placed in the record and forwarded to Mountbatten and the War Department. Lentaigne answered by charging that

Stilwell was refusing to allow him to withdraw his sick and wounded, now amounting, he said, to about 50 percent of his force. Stilwell replied that of course he wanted the ineffectives out, because so long as they stayed in the combat zone he had to supply them. Mountbatcen sent an investigating committee composed of Wedemeyer, Merrill, and Major General Playfair, Giffard's representative in Kandy and a bitter Stilwell critic, to the jungle to interview both parties and report. The 36th Division, meanwhile, had arrived at Stilwell's headquarters and The Boss was very pleased with both the division and Major General Francis Wogan Festing, freckled, six-foot-four-inch general officer commanding.

The committee returned and reported to Mountbatten that again Stilwell appeared to be absolutely correct in his statements but would make no formal issue out of the matter. Stilwell's inspector general was preparing a formal report, copies of which would be sent to Mountbatten and the War Department. Stilwell wanted the Chindits replaced by the 36th Division as soon as possible. One amusing sidelight developed during the investigation. It seems that Giffard had some officers in the area trying to get evidence against Stilwell. These officers approached Festing and warned him he would have lots of trouble with Vinegar Joe. Festing repeated this to Playfair and is reported to have said: "Please keep your damned snoopers out of here. General Stilwell and I are getting along fine. If I have any trouble I will let General Giffard know." The 36th replaced the Chindits, obeyed orders, fought as well as any troops, and had no trouble.

In the meantime the Marauders had blown up with a loud bang. After more than 100 days of almost continuous fighting in the jungles they were no longer able to carry out their responsibilities. They were brooding about the promise that they would have to engage in only one hazardous mission, made, presumably, by recruiting officers. Due to a misinterpretation of orders, Marauder convalescents were yanked out of hospitals and prepared for flight to Myitkyina. Everything added up to a complete morale breakdown. Stilwell later released an inspector general's report on the case which received wide publicity. This situation caused one more Chindit incident.

By August 23 the Marauder matter was an almost forgotten blemish on an otherwise superlative combat record. That day Joubert was reminded of it again by a clipping from the London Times. He suggested to Major L. Hope, acting as his British director of Public Relations, that the time was ripe to issue an official press note acknowledging the fact that the Marauders had had their troubles but had won their battles, and that was the main thing. Hope phoned the writer of this book and asked him to prepare the text. To the writer this was reviving an old scandal which could serve no purpose other than further blackening the name of a great fighting organization. The writer called on Joubert on May 24. He told the air marshal that he was quite ready to brief war correspondents quietly on the highly secret troubles of the Chindits if the press note on the Marauders were issued. Joubert was told that his suggestion was considered to be nothing short of another attempt to smear the Americans. The following paragraphs are excerpts from a memorandum prepared for Stilwell immediately after the meeting with Joubert:

1. Had he realized, Joubert said, the background of this matter, he never would have made the suggestion. He never heard of the matter before. He was well aware, now that he knew the background, that to make a public announcement would merely tend to rewash dirty linen.

2. He said that he had always considered that Merrill's forces were the only ones used properly in this campaign and that the Chindits were worthless from a military point of view.

3. We have, he continued, overplayed the Chindits in publicity, but that is now ended and there will be no more of it. We were under orders from the Prime Minister to do so. Wingate mesmerized the Prime Minister into believing this was a great force. The Prime Minister is strategically sound but tactically always wrong. He has made some frightful blunders.

4. I wish, he said, we could work these things out without treading on one another's toes.

5. I admit, he replied, that we must make face with the people we have ruled and will rule again... .

6. You see, many of these differences occur because Admiral Mountbatten keeps me in the dark. I am not fully informed. I have approached him on this three times. I shall approach him again.

I answered the air marshal as follows: “Ever since I came down here I have been trying to get you people to sit down with us, admit the difference in party line, and work out a mutual policy wherein you can make what face you consider necessary with your colonials, but do it in a manner that is not at our expense—hence disagreeable to us.”

A lot of things were boiling, only a few of which were pleasant for the British. Stilwell and the United States Government were bringing more and more pressure on the Generalissimo to attack down the Salween. There were sixteen Chinese divisions available for the purpose in Yunnan. These had received some Lend-Lease weapons and a modicum of training from the cadres that had passed through Stilwell’s training schools in China. Ho, with what was probably malicious Chinese humor, informed Mountbatten officially when his Fourteenth Army had its back to the wall at Imphal that the Chinese were ready to attack down the Salween “to rescue your forces at Imphal." At about the same time Lord Louis received a letter from the Madame in which she said that the Generalissimo had agreed to the Salween campaign in order to “rescue your forces on the Arakan.” This was a little too much for the British, coming as it did from the representatives of an army that was “an irresponsible rabble.” The British literally were frightened out of their wits that Ho or the Madame would make a public announcement corresponding to their messages. British prestige might withstand a lot but never a thing like that. Mountbatten radioed Lieutenant General A. Carton de Wiart, one-eyed, one-armed, shrewd personal representative of the Prime Minister in Chungking, to express British enthusiasm for the projected Salween operation, and to stress that it was not, repeat not, to help the British. Joubert notified the Public Relations officer of the Fourteenth Army that the official party line would be, “the Japanese are now so badly licked in Burma even the Chinese can come in.”

The only bright spot in the British picture was the trouble Stilwell was having at Myitkyina. Due to inadequate intelligence, the Marauders did not realize that the town was garrisoned by only about a battalion of Japanese

when they hit. Hence, in their condition of general exhaustion and understrength from casualties they took the airfield and dug in to protect it until Chinese reinforcements could be flown in to take the town. The Chinese were flown in on schedule, but in reverse order, because of some incomprehensible mix up. The infantry got in last. While this was going on the Chindits were not able to stop Japanese reinforcements, so the Allies bumped their noses against two well-entrenched regiments when they finally got ready to go.

The Chinese had been flown over from China and were like the rest of the Chinese troops in China. They were brave but lacked the slightest conception of how to fight an offensive action. After a few of them got shot up they just dug in and refused to budge. The Marauders were not available to spearhead them, so, in desperation, Stilwell ordered Pick to arm and fly in two battalions of engineers off the road. These were combat engineers presumed to have had basic infantry training in weapons and tactics. Some of them did not know how to fire a rifle. The same was true of some infantry replacements which had just arrived in India and were moved rapidly to Myitkyina. They were green, naturally. They were put in the line and some of them broke and ran in the face of the enemy and in the presence of the Chinese. After Merrill suffered his second heart attack the command of the force at Myitkyina passed successively to three more commanders before the town fell after a siege of seventy-eight days. There were many times during that period that the Japanese could have recaptured the air strip in a breeze had they mounted a concerted counter-attack. Those were grim and desperate days for Stilwell.

They were grim and desperate, but not enough to keep him from paying a touching tribute to the infantryman. Stilwell was always known as the "Infantry's General," and the War Department asked him to write a statement for Infantry Day. This statement was never published because somebody sent it by radio in secret code. To have published it at the time would have violated cryptographic security. The statement, written by the general in longhand on damp scratch paper in the heart of the jungle, is probably the finest tribute ever paid the infantryman. The statement follows:

So we have an Infantry Day. I am against it. Where the fighting is going on every day is Infantry Day. Here is the backbone of your armed forces, the boiled-down essence of combat, the guy who slugs it out personally with rifle and bayonet. Here is the man who is always too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, too exhausted, too hungry, too scared, but who still plugs ahead toward his unknown destination. Where this unassuming individual stops, there is the front line of battle. If he gets ahead, we win; if they run over him, we lose. So we give him a day. This man does not need a day for his services to be remembered. He is remembered every day in millions of American homes and every day his example of unselfish effacement of individuality for the common good stares us all in the face. Let somebody else have a day. The doughboy does not need it.

As The Boss sat in his rain-soaked tent at Shaduzup, trying to push his forces through the monsoon floods to take Mogaung and drive the enemy from Myitkyina, Mountbatten's staff sat in the midst of the pristine loveliness of the world-famous Peradeniya botanic gardens and debated. Mountbatten had been promised additional American air cargo resources to support operations into Burma. Because of the delay in cleaning up the situation at Manipur and in getting any place on the Arakan, the bulk of these resources was diverted to other theaters. Ho then radioed Mountbatten that he could not move Marshal Wei Li-huang's forces down the Salwéen without one of Mountbatten's combat cargo groups to air supply them. Diversion of such groups between theaters rested, in the last analysis, with the Combined Chiefs of Staff but they normally followed the recommendations of the commanders in the field. Mountbatten did not want to be put in the position of refusing the Chinese, so he told Ho that he had referred the matter to "my deputy," Stilwell. Lord Louis never expected Stilwell to go along with the Chinese, so he was shocked and chagrined when he received an informational copy of Stilwell's radio to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, in which Vinegar Joe calmly recommended the diversion of the group to the Chinese. This "'serious situation" was debated at meeting after meeting.

They debated the passing of Stilwell's command out from under the Eleventh Army Group, with Giffard now fighting it openly. Mountbatten finally ruled that an agreement had been made and would be kept. Stilwell

came directly under the admiral. But Mountbatten was afraid of Stilwell by this time and wanted a buffer between himself and The Boss. "After all,' he would say privately, "I am an admiral caught in the position of conducting jungle warfare—something I know nothing about—I need a strong ground commander as an adviser." So they started debating the establishment of an allied commander in chief of ground forces to sit between Mountbatten and his subordinates.

The radio suddenly broadcast the news that Mountbatten was feuding with Auchinleck, Commander in Chief, India Command. Public discussion became so great that it was necessary for the two commanders to exchange complimentary statements. At a staff meeting the bemused admiral stated that he hadn't been "having any trouble" with "the Awk" for several weeks. He wished the press would quit picking on him.

With a reputation in the American press of being a playboy (something all his press advisers were trying to live down for him) some clown in Mountbatten's Public Relations department permitted a man in Colombo to name an orchid after the admiral. Automatically Lord Louis became known as "the orchid man." Correspondents were being handled so badly that British newspapermen publicly announced that they were striking and would file no more copy. The situation became so serious that Lord Halifax cabled Mountbatten and Wavell that they had better get their Public Relations straightened out or there would be serious repercussions in American public opinion.

Although it had been going on for days, and had been publicly announced by his own press department, Lord Louis suddenly awoke to the fact that his forces on the Arakan had withdrawn to monsoon lines. This put them right back where they had started a year before. Mountbatten said this was in direct violation of his orders to fight through the monsoon. Admiral Somerville, after some debates about what the Eastern Fleet should be doing, cabled the Admiralty in London that he insisted Lord Louis take his advice on naval affairs. Lord Louis followed with a hot message, in which he stated that he was willing to take anyone's advice, but retained the privilege of rejecting it. An American officer shook his head sadly and said that Mountbatten's title should be changed to "The Fairly Supreme Allied

Commander." Slim's Fourteenth Army headquarters called him the "Superbo." Admiral Mountbatten's prestige at home and abroad had reached the depths.

Mountbatten presided over a meeting in Delhi and bitterly attacked Stilwell's press note. He said that so far as the world was concerned Stilwell's forces were the only troops in Asia fighting a war. He said his forces in Manipur and on the Arakan were receiving no publicity except critical comments on their inability to advance. The admiral directed that all press notes (Stilwell's, Stratemeyer's, Davidson's, and Slim's) would be abolished forthwith, with only his own communiqué remaining. Sultan, aware of Stilwell's wishes in the matter, and himself fearful of an exclusive British stranglehold on official military announcements, objected. The result of this objection was a conference the following day among Mountbatten, Sultan, Major General G.E. Wildman-Lushington, Mountbatten's assistant chief of staff, and the writer. After a lot of argument a compromise was reached wherein press notes would be retained but consolidated into one to be issued from Mountbatten's headquarters like the communiqué. The Americans succeeded in getting an agreement wherein they could continue to forward a separate Stilwell press note to Chungking for release there by the military spokesman. This, of course, automatically defeated the admiral in his aim to withhold publication of the press note until after the publication of his communiqué. He seemed to realize this dimly, and at first would not agree to the Chungking diversion. It was pointed out to him that, without this press note, the Chinese would fabricate their own announcements on the operations of Stilwell's Chinese which might prove highly embarrassing to the British. "Supposing," the Americans suggested, "the Chinese military spokesman should start announcing that Chinese troops operating around Mogaung were trying to rescue the British by pulling Japanese away from Imphal and the Arakan." "Yes," Lord Louis said with a shiver, "that would be bad, wouldn't it? Very bad. You may release your press note in Chungking."

The British were making other efforts to consolidate and control the dissemination of information. They were doing their best to integrate the OWI and the British Ministry of Information into one department under Mountbatten's Psychological Warfare Division. This was killed by the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, as such a consolidation would have put United States propaganda under the control of a foreign government, and would have automatically aligned the United States with the British in their propaganda designed to make colonial exploitation palatable to those being exploited. This attitude was carried to the ultimate when the Americans refused to permit the British to use American recordings of entertainment material to build up audiences for their propaganda broadcasts.

On the military side of the picture the Chinese had started a halting advance down the Salween, and Stilwell's troops had captured Mogaung. The British were still not getting any place in Manipur and had withdrawn to monsoon lines on the Arakan. The last caused a decided outburst from Lord Louis at a staff meeting. Mountbatten said: "I am being disobeyed constantly by my subordinate commanders. Disobedience will be tolerated no longer."

Marshal Wei, pushed by Brigadier General "Pinkie" Dorn, chief liaison officer with the Chinese forces in Yunnan, was fumbling around in the Salween gorge and on the heights. It is doubtful whether his force was opposed by a strength of more than two Japanese regiments, but he had a very tough proposition. The Salween country is about the worst in the world for military operations. The Japanese were well entrenched in wonderful natural defensive positions and the Chinese troops lacked the equipment, training, and leadership of the two divisions Stilwell trained at Ramgarh. As usual, Ho Ying-chin had promised replacements for the Salween forces and, as usual, failed to deliver any. After this force had suffered an estimated 28,000 casualties from wounds, disease, exposure, and malnutrition there were still no replacements. Despite all this, Wei's troops finally fought and blundered their way into Burma to join with Sun's troops in 1945, thereby opening the Stilwell Road.

Although the Chinese were advancing on the Salween, Stilwell was proceeding as usual, and the British were beginning to get their second wind in Manipur, things were far from smooth either militarily or politically. On the political front Pownall was in London. He had reported on the Chindits, but his primary mission was conceded to be one of laying the groundwork for the removal of Stilwell as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. His mission was to furnish the British Chiefs of Staff

sufficient evidence on Stilwell's recalcitrance and refusal to act as DSAC to make a case to present in Washington. His visit served as a good illustration also of how Mountbatten's staff was functioning.

When the combined staff was formed, Wedemeyer and Mountbatten got together and agreed on staff procedure. It was understood that the Americans (Wedemeyer) might wish to communicate direct with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, and that the British might wish to communicate direct with the British Chiefs of Staff in London. It was understood that there would be no secrecy about such communications and that all messages, incoming and outgoing, would be shared by British and Americans alike. Everything would be above board and strictly on the level, even when the two groups might be at cross-purposes. Americans and British would use a common message center, radio facilities, and codes. Wedemeyer had begun to suspect that he was getting the run- around before Sir Henry went to London. By the time the chief of staff had returned, and Wedemeyer had the opportunity of checking the number sequence of Pownall's messages to Mountbatten as they were entered on the log, he realized that out of forty-nine Pownall messages he had been shown just exactly five. This was not cricket, and from then on Wedemeyer started sending his own private messages to the War Department. To make sure these messages were not compromised, he filed them through Stilwell's liaison office, which maintained its own separate radio station and codes.

On the military front a message from Carton de Wiart, received on May 29, was a bombshell for Stilwell's people. De Wiart said that Ho had called Ferris and himself in and reported that the Japanese were moving sixteen divisions south from Manchukuo (Manchuria) into China. Ho's appreciation indicated that their objective was the capture of the Hankow—Canton Railway, which would cut off Chennault's advance airfields and turn to move on Kunming. Chiang, according to Ho, was positive that the Japanese had made a deal with the Russians.

Kunming was the fulcrum of United States strategy in the Far East. It was the site of most of the training schools, it was the base for the Salween operation and Chennault's, Fourteenth Air Force and, with the completion of the Stilwell Road, would be the terminal for truck convoys and the gas

pipeline. Chinese intelligence in China had always been accurate when it was not being used for some ulterior purpose, and both De Wiart and Ferris considered Ho's estimate to be correct. Chennault was alarmed and suddenly discarded his philosophy of holding the Japanese Army with his air force. He said that the Chinese Army would have to do it and he must have more air resources to help effectively. De Wiart urged Mountbatten to recommend to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the B-29s, not yet in operation against Japan, be diverted to Chennault for use against the Japanese Army.

Later, as the situation grew worse, De Wiart relayed a request from Chiang for some of Mountbatten's air resources, but the admiral replied that he had given one combat cargo group to the Salween forces and returned to The Hump ships that had been supporting the Fourteenth Army. The answer was no.

Back on the political front the British were becoming more and more alarmed about their future position at the Japanese peace table. The Pacific strategy was being handled by the United States in such a way that Britain was being frozen out of any Japanese island invasion plans. It is a well-known fact that the United States Navy did not want the British Fleet in the Pacific under any circumstances. The British, lacking targets in Southeast Asia, were trying to palm off the Eastern Fleet on Nimitz in order to have a cheap participation in the Pacific war. Nimitz, backed by the United States Navy Department, was steadfastly refusing to accept the British vessels. The military reasons for this were twofold.

(1) Running a campaign without having to worry about allies is 100 percent more efficient, and

(2) the British Fleet was completely obsolete by American standards. There may have been higher level diplomatic considerations as well. That the general situation in the Pacific had become a matter of deep British concern can be illustrated by the following excerpts from a confidential memorandum on SEAC publicity in America. The memorandum was written by Mr. Harold Butler, H.M. Minister, Washington, D.C. The memo is entitled "Publicity Requirements for the War in Asia" and was directed to SEAC.

From a political point of view it is of great importance that the British share in the war against Japan should receive the fullest possible publicity. The extent of British participation, or rather the American opinion of its extent, will considerably affect both the American attitude toward the Far East settlement and Anglo-American relations in general. If the American public believes that Britain has taken a considerable and effective part in the Japanese war, they are likely to be much more sympathetic to our claims when the peace is made, more particularly as they are still suspicious that we intend to leave as much of the work as possible to them....

Of further significance is the following excerpt taken from a memorandum on the same subject as above written by Brigadier Scott Coburn of the British Information Services, Washington, D.C.:

(d) Global Strategy—In America it is necessary to show the bearing of the British war effort on the American war effort. For instance, if we could show that our repulse of the Japanese contributed to the failure of their attempt to cut the supply line (Assam—Bengal LOC) for American bombers .... it would greatly aid in publicizing this neglected theater.... It is not enough to show that in joint assaults British troops played their part. It is also necessary to stress the contribution of purely British efforts at a distance from the American center of interest....

Following excerpts of a statement to the press by Mountbatten on August 21, 1944, are printed purely as an illustration of the British party line in publicity. Bracketed statements and italics were inserted by the author. The statement was issued through the British Ministry of Information in London, where Lord Louis had gone for a conference.

The South East Asia Command is a long way off. Events there are apt to be overshadowed in Europe by the climax of the war against Germany and in the Pacific by the advances of Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur. Therefore, a major effort by Allied forces doing their duty in inhospitable places has been somewhat crowded out, and the forces have not received their proportion of credit. My purpose this afternoon is to put this achievement before you.

Enemy-held territory in the South East Asia theater extends some 2,500 miles southward from the north of Burma. The front on which we are at present fighting in Burma alone extends some 700 miles and is second only in length to the Russian front. It is hard land crust which protects the Japanese conquests in China and Indo-China. It is Japan's land route to India, and, more important, the Allies' land route to China. Both offensively and defensively Japan had strained and is straining every nerve to hold Burma. Since the formation of the South East Asia Command, the Japanese forces in Burma have been more than doubled.

In any appreciation of the achievements of the forces of SEAC it must be borne in mind that the Japanese are fighting from interior lines, control Burma's river systems, railways, and roads and, since they are a rice-eating army, live off the fat of the land. We, on the other hand, are fighting from the most difficult lines of communication in the world. The so-called Assam lines of communication communicate with the tea gardens all right but not with Burma! They were built for the tea gardens but not for total war. There were no roads into Burma from the north. The lower reaches of the Brahmaputra River are unbridgeable. Assam is in fact a logistical nightmare. Moreover, advancing as we are from the west we are fighting against the grain of the country, for its steep, jungle-clad mountains and swift flowing rivers, all running north-south, constitute a barrier but not a route between India and China.

In 1943 the imagination of the world was captured by a small force of British and Indian troops under Brigadier Wingate, which made the first experiment in long-range penetration and proved that we could outfight the Japanese in a kind of war which he had made his own, and under conditions which were to his advantage. It was to be a harbinger of bigger things; but in itself, of course, the experiment was on a small scale.

At Quebec, the British and American governments decided that the time had come to form an Allied Operational Command to take over the British Command from GHO India, and include the American Command in Burma and India, and be responsible for land, sea, and air operations against Japan in Southeast Asia.

In view of my original association with Combined Operations, a lot of people, myself included, jumped to the conclusion that large-scale amphibious operations in S.E.A. would at once be the order of the day; but it need now be no secret that all the landing ships and craft originally allotted had to be withdrawn for more urgent operations in the west, and, in fact, carried the troops that assaulted the Anzio beaches, and have subsequently been taking part in the invasion of France. With the vast requirements and urgent priorities in Europe, the order to us in Burma was to carry on with what we had left. I am proud to be able to report to you that the order has been carried out during the past seven months in a manner which reflects credit on all the forces of the United Nations engaged in the theater.

Our plans had to be recast on a less ambitious scale, but there was one thing we could do and that was to drive the Japanese out of the northeast corner of Burma, so as to improve our communications with China and thus increase the supplies which are so badly needed to keep our Chinese Allies in the war and to enable General Chennault to continue his very effective operations with the 14th United States Air Force in China. A concerted plan was made for the whole of the Burma front, to enable the forces in the northeast to advance. General Stilwell, who is the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander and the Commanding General of the American forces in the China-Burma-India theater, with himself commanded the forces on the Ledo front. He had under his command those Chinese forces which he had originally withdrawn from Burma into India and which had since been augmented. These forces are a good example of Allied collaboration, being equipped and trained by the United States and paid and fed by the British. The Marauders of the American Rangers contributed greatly to the successful advance of this force down the Hukawng Valley to Myitkyina and Mogaung.

An advance in Burma is a very different affair from an advance in France or Russia, since it has largely to be carried out along the single axis of your supply lines, and a relatively small force can thus stop the advance of a much larger force, however resolutely led. It thus became of the utmost importance that the overall plans for Burma should prevent large Japanese reinforcements being able to bar the progress of the Chinese-American

forces. There were two ways in which the Fourteenth Army could most materially help the advance of the Ledo forces. Firstly by cutting the communications of the veteran 18th Division who were facing the Ledo front, and secondly by engaging the greatest number of other Japanese divisions in Burma. The first task, the cutting of the 18th Japanese Division's lines of communication to the south, was given to General Wingate's long-range Penetration Forces who included a West African Brigade and were flown in by Colonel Cochran's United States Air Commandos aided by British and American transport squadrons. The second task would have proved a more serious problem if it had not been that the Japanese plan fortunately played into our hands. [Mountbatten now describes the fighting on the Arakan and in Manipur.]

.... It will thus be seen that in fact the Japanese plan materially helped us for we would naturally far sooner have had them attack as far away as possible from our intended line of advance in the Hukawng Valley.

Meanwhile, American and Chinese Forces by a great feat of arms crossed the Nauri Hyket Pass and descended with complete surprise on the airfield at Myitkyina, thus enabling American and Chinese reinforcements to be flown in.

In addition, one of the Long Range Penetration Brigades now commanded by General Lentaigne, who had succeeded Wingate after he had met his death in an air crash in the jungle, entered Mogaung from the south and was soon joined from the north by Chinese Forces. [The Chindits attacked after the initial refusal to do so.] It will thus be seen that the capture of Myitkyina and Mogaung was the result of a series of closely coordinated operations on the part of British, American, and Chinese troops. The 36th Division has now been placed under General Stilwell's command on this section of the front.

The death of Wingate was a great disaster. He was killed at the moment of triumph and fulfillment. He was the inventor of new ideas and the inspiration of his example lives on among the Long Range Penetration Forces he trained and led. [Lord Louis probably was Wingate's only important British supporter in Asia, but even he said at a dinner that the Chindits were of little military importance.]

All these impressive results have not been secured without heavy casualties. Allied forces in 1944 have suffered 10,000 killed, 3,000 missing, and 27,000 wounded, but this they have amply avenged by killing no fewer than 50,000 Japanese.

It has usually been accepted that the monsoon brings fighting virtually to a standstill on both sides. More than fifty inches of rain fell last month on one part of the front alone, but in spite of these difficulties the British and American Air Forces have continued to fly and the land forces have continued to march, pursue, and attack with unremitting vigor. [This is debatable. The land forces lost contact with the retreating Japanese and did not follow them across the Chindwin while the Japanese were disorganized.]

Even more deadly and persistent is the mosquito. Malaria has conquered empires and can cripple armies. In the British campaign in Arakan, in 1943, it inflicted a particularly heavy toll. The zeal and skill of American and British medical services have succeeded this year in reducing the ravages of malaria by no less than 40 percent. Particularly effective have been the development of Advance Treatment Centers which have virtually perfected a lightning cure—over 90 percent of the patients report fit for duty after three weeks. All the same, since the beginning of the year just on a quarter of a million casualties have been suffered in Burma from sickness—mostly malaria and dysentery. Never has medical science been put to so severe a test in war. [If this is true, British preventive medical discipline was sad indeed by comparison with American.]

I mentioned air supply earlier. Since May alone we have carried just on 70,000 tons and 93,000 men, including 25,500 casualties by air. [American troop-carrier squadrons of thirteen planes carried double the tonnage of RAF twenty-five-plane squadrons—four times the tonnage per day and per plane per day.] These figures exclude the great air supply with China.

By sea we have not been idle. The Eastern Fleet under Admiral Sir James Somerville had been increasing their pressure to see whether they could entice the Japanese Fleet into action or else to contain part of them in the Malacca Straits, and thus keep them from interfering with the American

operations in the Pacific. [This Japanese fleet must have been a ghost. It was never seen.]

The signal success of these actions shows clearly that the naval balance of power is being steadily redressed in South East Asia. [Eastern Fleet vs. nothing except submarines.] The Japanese Navy is now as afraid to accept action in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal as it is in the Pacific. The Royal Navy has received valuable help from the Royal Indian Navy and various American [the Saratoga was sent to give primary instructions on carrier warfare], French, and Dutch naval units. The R.I.N., which has expended enormously, has helped to maintain the bases for the Eastern Fleet to operate and provided very valuable addition to convoy escorts across the Indian Ocean.

I should like to take this opportunity of paying a tribute to the Government of India and the India Command. The importance of India as a base from which operations are launched in South East Asia cannot be overemphasized. The great strides made over the past year in the logistical development of India provide firm encouragement for the future. [He refers to United States railway and port personnel.] I would like to stress, in particular, the personal help and support I have received from Lord Wavell and General Auchinleck, as also from my deputy, General Stilwell, whose long experience in the East has been of signal assistance to me in our common task.

I am glad to have had this opportunity of endeavoring to explain the significance of the 1944 Burma campaign. I am proud of the gallant fighting which has taken place on all fronts, and I hope that my statement may make the people who read it proud of the achievements of their own countrymen and grateful to their Allies who helped them in these achievements.

Another Quebec conference was in the offing, and Mountbatten was due in London to brief the British Chiefs of Staff before their departure. Pownall was back, having done his best in the attempt to have Stilwell removed from his post as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. Mountbatten was making no attempt to remove The Boss from the theater or from command of his field forces. He wanted to get Stilwell out of a post where he refused

to serve, but had to be considered during perpetual planning. Lord Louis had a point there, from the British point of view. In addition the admiral wanted to replace Giffard with a more aggressive commander. This general was not only a thorn in the side of the Americans, he was a great irritant to Mountbatten because of tactical disagreements and because he, possibly by force of habit, would usually "prove" that certain plans for amphibious operation, dear to Mountbatten's heart, were impossible. Lord Louis had gotten rid of Somerville, who was to be replaced later by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Commander in Chief of the British Home Fleet.

With Lord Louis scheduled to leave his command for the trip to London the question came up of who should act as Supremo in his absence. In any orthodox organization the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander would have assumed command automatically. There was nothing orthodox about Stilwell's position on Mountbatten's staff, and Lord Louis was sure that Vinegar Joe would refuse to come down. During one staff meeting, when he was particularly angry with Stilwell, the admiral said of him: "Why, he won't even come down to see me." The British could not arbitrarily appoint a substitute for Mountbatten, however, without openly snubbing Stilwell. The British were being very, very careful that any snubbing should be done by Vinegar Joe and not by them. So Mountbatten sent Stilwell a radio in which he said: ". . . the question of who will act as Supremo in my absence is a complicated one." Puckish Joe Stilwell, knowing full well what the reaction would be, radioed back: "I don't see any complications. I'll come down and take over."

To coin a British phrase, Mountbatten and Co. "had had it." Throughout the sylvan glades of the botanic gardens panic pursued panic. What could be done? Was this monster really coming to beloved Kandy? What would he do once he got control? The planners were hard at work on their perpetual job of drawing schemes to junk the North Burma operation and devise plans for amphibious warfare elsewhere—when resources were available, of course. Would they be told to cease their never-ending research and meetings? Leaving SEAC in Stilwell's hands was like consigning your young and beautiful bride to the protection of a Pacific combat veteran who hadn't seen a woman for eighteen months. After a series of worried huddles

the British decided they would have to stick it. There was nothing else to do.

Uncle Joe landed in Colombo on July 31 where he was met by Merrill. He was driven immediately to the Office of Strategic Services' bungalow in the long black Cadillac Lord Louis had assigned him. The following day he had lunch with the Supremo at the latter's fabulous King's Pavilion. "I've got to quit eating with Louis," he commented. "I actually like those rum cocktails." Mountbatten left for London on September 2 and Stilwell took over. He presided over the daily Supreme Allied Commander's meeting and wound it up in ten minutes.

The normal session ran slightly over two hours. He indicated that all British items henceforth could be handled by the chief of staff, and all items having to do with the Americans would be handled by himself. He said he saw no reason for any more meetings. He indicated that he was not interested in anything other than getting a rest, and he expected the chief of staff to do 99 percent of the commanding in the absence of Lord Louis. The British sigh of relief could have been heard in Calcutta.

He came into his office in the mornings to transact predominantly CBI business and spent his afternoons reading, or trying to play an accordion at the bungalow, or sightseeing. Merrill and the writer called on him one afternoon with a highly important piece of business involving politics and publicity. The general came out of his room clad in his underwear and his old GI shoes. Absentmindedly he rendered a decision on the point in one sentence and then turned on Merrill in exasperation. "Can you fix my damned accordion?" he asked. "One of the keys sticks and I can't figure out what to do with it." Merrill, an accordion player of some volume, fixed the key and the general was delighted. He indicated that the meeting was ended and started to caress his squeeze box.

Before the general arrived Merrill had arranged a large cocktail party for the staff to meet Stilwell. Invitations had been issued and The Boss couldn't back out. About 150 people came to the party, given at one of Kandy's hotels. Most of them had never seen the general. First to arrive were members of Stilwell's liaison group who were handling the details of the party. Stilwell arrived soon after. One of the officers was carefully and

rapidly sampling all the drinks. He observed Stilwell, the teetotaler, watching him. “I’m the official taster, General,” he explained. “They might be poisoned.”

“You’re nothing but a common drunk,” said the general, his eyes twinkling.

The 150 guests drank fifty-six quarts of American bourbon, plus a case of gin and a case of rum. Stilwell, strictly on his good behavior and turning on the charm, was the life of the party. He was in rare form, even if he didn’t take a drink. A British lieutenant colonel squared his shoulders and said, “I can swim the Kandy Lake.” His audience expressed doubt. “I can swim it with my uniform on,” he said. An audience, conditioned to proving anything was impossible, insisted this one-man amphibious operation was out of the question. Leaning slightly to the starboard, the officer advanced to the lake with an air of quiet dignity. Without a glance at those who came to scoff, he waded into the lake and, fully dressed, swam the 150 yards to the opposite shore. Everybody said it was the best party Kandy had ever seen.

The following day Stilwell was informed of this feat. The Boss thought a minute then said: “That’s fine. Maybe the idea will spread and we'll be able to get some of these people across the Chindwin this fall.”

Stilwell was setting this British headquarters on its collective ear. Up in Burma, Uncle Joe acquired an extra special cook. His aides discovered Sergeant Jules (Gus) Reynault, former chief steward of the Stork Club. Something had to be done to make the food palatable enough for the general to keep it down. Gus should be able to do it if anybody could. Gus, a volatile Frenchman, not only became the general’s cook, he became the culinary dictator. Once, by dint of prodigious enterprise, including theft, Gus got some vegetables. He also got hold of some fresh meat and made a vegetable stew. The general never got any vegetables except in his C rations. Proudly Gus served this stew and stood back to watch. He was aghast when he saw the general push the vegetables aside and eat only the meat. Gus went into action. His face flushed and his eyes bulging against his glasses, he told the general that he must eat his vegetables. He said he was responsible for the general’s health, but he could not be if the general

would not eat what was placed before him. Uncle Joe meekly took back his plate and ate his vegetables.

Gus was cooking for the general in Kandy. In that island of tropical munificence he was turning out feasts as routine meals. Stilwell didn't like his Cadillac because it was too fancy for him. He ordered a jeep. He turned the Cadillac over to Gus to do the daily marketing in the bazaar. Gus liked the Cadillac, but his thrifty French soul rebelled when the bazaar salesmen jacked up their prices out of respect for the Cadillac. All this added up to a strange daily routine. Stilwell and his aides would drive up to his office in the jeep. Gus would be immediately behind, riding in solitary chauffeured splendor in the back seat of the limousine. Both vehicles would be parked. The general would go to his office and Gus would take the jeep for the marketing, returning with the groceries to pick up the Cadillac. This was too much for the British.

Stilwell refused to use Mountbatten's office. He never said why, but the office was a rather elaborate affair about the length of Mussolini's. Stilwell used his liaison office, about fifteen feet square, and shared it with a minimum of two other officers and a WAC sergeant, Betty Lou Meeker. Although he had steadfastly opposed the importation of WACs into CBI, Stilwell took a fancy to the sergeant. She became a member of his family, just like Gus and his two current aides, Major Carl Arnold and Young. He had her up to his bungalow for dinner along with the rest. Being interested in history, he asked her if she was related to Ezra Meeker, pioneer of the Oregon Trail. A niece, she said. He then told her more about her uncle than she had ever heard.

Stilwell loved his military family. Arnold, who before he became an aide sang "God Bless America" that day in Shwebo, was his particular favorite. The former junior high-school music teacher was an irrepressible punster and was tabbed the court jester of the palace guard. He was a delightful and charming fellow who will be youthful when he is sixty. He was wonderful for Vinegar Joe's morale. The two would sit and wisecrack by the hour. One could get a picture of Joe Stilwell at home by spying on the OSS bungalow veranda almost any afternoon. Gus would be napping on a couch, his shoes off. Arnold and Young would be sparring, wrestling, or telling funny stories.

Stilwell, minus his shirt, would be sitting, supposedly reading the newspaper, but surreptitiously watching and enjoying the whole performance through twinkling eyes over the top of the paper.

While Stilwell was still in Kandy the British got their answer to the move to remove him as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. The United States Government made him a full general. An officer stuck his head into the office and said, “I just saw a press message that you had been nominated for your fourth star.” Stilwell chuckled. “So I've been nominated, have I?” he said. “How do you think I’ll do in the election?” In addition Stilwell was directed to screen all SEAC’s requests for Lend-Lease which put the general in control of Mountbatten’s supply line.

Mountbatten returned from London on August 24 and Stilwell left for Delhi and Chungking on the twenty-ninth. While he was in Kandy the British cleaned up Manipur and the Chinese-American forces finally captured Myitkyina and proceeded southward. The British did not advance across the Chindwin, giving the Japanese time to regroup and entrench before they crossed later.

The British welcomed Mountbatten home, heaved a sigh of relief, and, much to their surprise, thought old Vinegar Joe hadn’t been such a bad sort after all.

CHAPTER NINE

The Recall

STILWELL WENT to Delhi to meet Donald Nelson and Major General Patrick J. Hurley, the latest presidential envoys with a mission to make Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek see the light and do a little fighting. During the two years and six months (as of September 1944) of Stilwell's stewardship even President Roosevelt was beginning to get tough with the Kuomintang Government.

Throughout the years Stilwell backed, hot and heavy by his government, had insisted that Chiang make a deal with the Communists so that the full power of the Nationalist and the Communist armies could be turned against the common enemy. Various personal representatives flew to China to back Stilwell in his demands. The most recent had been Vice-President Henry A. Wallace, who told the Generalissimo that his government was very disturbed at what appeared to be unwillingness on the part of the Kuomintang to arrange any sort of a working agreement with the Communists.

Chiang, while always assuring his visitors that the great offensive was just across the paddy, refused to budge. Promises roll off the tongues of Chinese officials of the Gimo and Ho stripe like adobe marbles off a teetering table, and have about as much intrinsic value. As one American diplomatic official and a great lover of the Chinese race put it: "I believe in the fundamental corruptibility of every Chinese official." The Generalissimo kept insisting on obtaining control over the allocation of Lend-Lease so that he could equip his armies the better to trounce the Communists at leisure after America had won the war. Time magazine, in a sentimental bow to the man who double-crossed Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese revolutionary who made Chiang what he was, quoted Chiang on the subject of his desire to control, as did other governments, his own Lend-Lease. Chiang is supposed to have said the United States was treating him like a thief.

Nobody ever accused the Generalissimo of being a thief. Why should he be a thief? The Chinese treasury was his. Write a check! But the Government and the Army had a little body of hand-picked men who made the fine art of robbery, as practiced by thieves of higher learning in the United States, look like the fumbling of mental defectives. These were big-time operators who skipped the normal bachelor's degree in Chinese squeeze to take Ph.D.s cum laude in the school of wholesale diversion of public property. Don't forget Yu Fei-peng on the Burma Road. If Chiang took control of his own Lend-Lease he didn't even have any assurance it would get to his armies to fight the Communists. China is a big country. Even Chiang couldn't personally deliver each howitzer to a battery commander.

While Hurley and Nelson urged the Generalissimo to make his peace with the Communists and presented the other United States demands, things were going to hell in a hand basket throughout China. Chennault learned at long last that his air force could not stop the Japanese Army, no matter how valiantly they flew and fought. As one advance 14th Air Force base fell after another Chennault offered the final irony in a plea to Sultan to furnish more arms and ammunition for the Chinese Army to protect what was left of his bases. All possible planes were diverted to the task of flying small arms, ammunition, and artillery to the Chinese forces, but it was too late.

Stilwell, the prophet, had been vindicated, but to what end? To see the labor of almost two years of airfield construction disappear in the dust of a conquering Japanese Army which advanced to Kweiyang, midway on the road between Chungking and Kunming, threatening both cities as they never had been threatened before. According to Marshall's Biennial Report, the Japanese were repulsed at that point. With due regard to the desire of the war's greatest general to maintain the diplomatic amenities, the facts of the case are quite different. Nobody ran the Japanese out of Kweiyang. For some incomprehensible reason they about-faced and retired. Bemused Allied commanders in the Far East tried to figure out that one for weeks.

On the India—Burma side, oddly enough, things were looking better. Giffard was taken from the picture by the expedient of abolishing the Eleventh Army Group and substituting General Sir Oliver Leese as Commander in Chief of all Allied ground forces. Sir Oliver took a look

around and told Mountbatten he had seen enough of this perpetual planning. “We have an assigned job,” said the former commander of the Fifth Army in Italy. “We'll get it done and start planning about next moves afterward.” He turned Slim loose and the Fourteenth Army started on its way to Mandalay.

Up in Myitkyina, Sultan was batting for Stilwell by commanding the Chinese, the Mars Task Force, mixed Chinese-American brigade, and the British 36th Division. The Chinese and Mars moved steadily down the road to Bhamo and turned for the Burma Road, where they eventually hooked up with the Salween force to open the Stilwell Road. Sultan was handling the Chinese in a surprisingly able fashion. Festing was establishing a personal legend as the most colorful and fearless general since Stilwell by leading his crack 36th Division south from Mogaung, protecting the Chinese right flank. Festing and his British troops distinguished themselves over and over as intrepid, aggressive fighters and took the Japanese like the Japanese took Singapore.

Although the United States’ policy in China was one of keeping the Gimo on his throne, Hurley and Nelson carried some very rough demands that amounted to an ultimatum. The demands were:

1. Peace between the Communists and the Kuomintang, in order that the armies of the two could make a united and effective front against the Japanese.

2. Stilwell to be made Commander in Chief of all Allied armies in China to insure the most effective distribution and use of all supplies and arms available in the China Theater. That Stilwell be given the power to reorganize the armies, promote, demote, and select leaders, remove the dead-wood political generals in order to move in the direction of making the Chinese Army an effective military entity.

3. A shake-up of Chiang’s cabinet to remove anti-foreign ministers (with particular emphasis on Ho) and possible profiteers in Lend-Lease.

From the start Stilwell had been trying to get the Gimo to reach some kind of a rapprochement with Mao Tse-tung, leader of the Chinese Communist

Party. To Stilwell, the forthright soldier, there was only one thing to do and it must be done without delay—fight the Japanese with everything available. To do so effectively the possibly 500,000 Chinese Nationalist troops, the best equipped of those Nationalist troops who had not received American arms, must be withdrawn from their job of penning in the Communists to the north. Stilwell wanted the Communist Army too. Blockaded by Japan and their own countrymen, sometimes literally fighting with knives and cudgels, Mao Tse-tung's guerrillas at least made a pretense of harassing the Japanese, while Chiang's armies joined the Japanese in smuggling, running ferries across river boundaries, or retired when the enemy was still 100 miles away. To Stilwell there was only one thing to do—fight. Whether this be by guerrilla activity or what not, until equipment was sufficient to mount a solid offensive, was beside the point. Any activity would kill and harass the Japanese. This was no time for Chiang to assume that Pearl Harbor Day was the date for China to fold its hands and watch the Americans win the war.

Ho and the Generalissimo made bland promises and broke them with equal blandness. They did not permit Stilwell's forces to advance in the spring of 1943 because Stilwell had promised them an all-out Burma offensive with an amphibious invasion of Rangoon which was not delivered. They promised unlimited manpower for Ramgarh and gave the general two and one half divisions to equip and train. They promised replacements, which, when they came at all, came too late and in much too small quantity. Stilwell wanted to concentrate what little Lend-Lease he knew he could get into one highly mobile, well-equipped, and well-trained striking force. Ho and the Generalissimo wanted to spread the Lend-Lease out thin during the war, and they delayed the delivery of adequate numbers of students for the training schools, because a modern Chinese army might upset Chiang's delicate hold on power within his own country. It would make him and Ho lose face for what they had not done for their armies in the past. Chiang, after all, was not the undisputed leader of all China.

So Ho and the Generalissimo regarded mediocrity as the proper caliber for an army which, feeling the explosive oats of Lend-Lease and modern training, might turn on the medieval, ineffective, and corrupt oligarchy sweating it out in Chungking.

Chiang was surrounded by a group of Kuomintang leaders as anti-foreign as he. After three generations of extraterritorial privileges and condescension from both British and Americans, this is understandable. British and American clubs in China barred Chinese from membership, even as British clubs in India bar Indians. In Hong Kong, Chinese peasants were barred from whole residential sections. No matter how altruistic was America's foreign policy, American business interests exploited the Chinese as best they could and, in general, treated them as an inferior race. Through the years this developed a sort of Chinese institutional inferiority complex, manifested in various ways, including anti-foreign bias. This hostility represented the chickens coming home to roost. But with the war on and everybody thrice blessed by the brotherhood of arms against the common enemy, it seemed time for a little brotherhood of man to rear its unfamiliar head. Roosevelt had gone to the extent of bringing pressure on the British to join with America in renouncing extraterritoriality in China, and had pushed Russia and Britain into admitting China into the sacred confines of the Big Four as an equal partner. He did this last despite more realistic Russian and British diplomats delicately gagging in their pocket handkerchiefs. Roosevelt, through these acts, and powerful speeches in which he praised the valor and tenacity of Chinese arms in spite of all adversity, gave the Generalissimo and his cohorts more international face than they ever had had in their lives. The Generalissimo went through the act of being a good Christian. Now was the time for a little Christian reciprocity from him and his henchmen.

Stilwell's aims being entirely military, his number-one béte noire was Ho. The little Chinese general was the Sir George Giffard of China. It was through him, as chief of staff and Minister of War, that Stilwell must implement his desires. It was Ho who always promised but never delivered. This reached a point where Stilwell, an impatient and single-purposed man, refused to deal with the Chinese general on anything. He would deal only with the Generalissimo. As far as Stilwell was concerned, Ho must go and be replaced by General Chen Cheng, an able Chinese general sincerely anxious to do something for the Chinese Army.

Stilwell knew more about the Chinese Army than either the Generalissimo or Ho. Stilwell had seen them in training, in barracks, in combat for years,

which was a good deal more than the Gimo or Ho could say. Repeatedly and to no avail Stilwell told these two the true facts about the corruption, defection, disease, malnutrition, and general incompetence of their army. The Generalissimo, becoming almost psychopathically suspicious of all around him as galloping inflation and military defeat made his personal position weaker, would listen to nothing. Stilwell, psychologically incapable of humbling himself before a man he considered to have the mentality of a circus clown, grew to hate the Generalissimo.

There is little question but what Chiang in turn grew to hate this dynamic little man who kept needling and prodding him to use his armies against the Japanese instead of using them as political instruments to perpetuate his own power. But personalities or Stilwell's tendency to speak his mind did not lead to the recall of Vinegar Joe. It was far more fundamental than that. It was the clash of national interest and the historic Chinese search for a scapegoat to hand the responsibility for defeat on the battlefield that caused the return of an unchastened Stilwell to Washington. Sitting in Carmel awaiting reassignment, Stilwell took a shot at speculation on his caustic vocabulary being the cause of his dismissal. Howard Smith painted a portrait of the general from a photograph. Once, while the general was present, Mrs. Stilwell said: "I want you to notice the general's upper lip." As the wife and the artist stared, Stilwell remarked with a chuckle: "Oh, too much lip again, huh!"

As the Japanese advanced into Central China and Hurley and Nelson pressed their demands, the frantic Chiang suddenly resolved to withdraw his troops from the Salween to protect Kunming. The American ambassadors were telling Chiang, in no uncertain terms this time, that failure to meet United States demands might cause America to withdraw all support from China, including the beloved 14th Air Force. They said that the United States Government was very critical of his handling of the Japanese threat to the American air bases. The Generalissimo bitterly attacked Stilwell and accused him of weakening the eastern front by insisting on the Salween campaign. Stilwell, he said, was responsible for the debacle. He said he would withdraw his troops from the Salween to stop the Japanese. The Americans, backed by Washington, insisted that this would be abandoning the Stilwell Road just as it was about to be

completed, and they would not tolerate such a move. It was suggested pointedly that some Nationalist troops be flown down from Yennan.

Faced with the prospect of losing United States support and the 14th Air Force, the Generalissimo caved in for the moment. He would lose too much face by such reprisals. His position in China was not sufficiently strong to risk it. He agreed to all United States demands and said he would put Stilwell, “in whom I have complete confidence,” in command of his armies. It looked as if the battle had been won. It looked as if Stilwell could consolidate divisions, arm them, and use Nationalist and Communist armies side by side. The Communists had already notified Stilwell that they would take the field in force against the Japanese under his command, but only under his command.

Suddenly Chiang reversed himself and said that he would agree to all American demands but that the United States would have to withdraw Stilwell, who was personally obnoxious to him. Only one logical explanation has been offered for this by insiders. They claim that H.H. Kung, big banker, married to one of the Soong sisters, was in Washington at the time and had a little chat with Harry Hopkins. On the basis of what Hopkins is supposed to have told him, Kung is said to have cabled the Generalissimo that the White House, which had never let Chiang down, was not prepared to be as tough as the Hurley-Nelson demands indicated. Kung has denied this publicly. In any event, Chiang reversed himself to the point of demanding the recall of Stilwell, in whom just before he had had complete confidence. The question of Stilwell's return to the United States was fought out by wire for nearly three weeks, with Chiang and Roosevelt exchanging personal messages.

During all these negotiations Hurley had distinguished himself with undoubted personal charm, with an uninhibited propensity to give Choctaw war whoops at Chinese parties, as a raconteur of classic yarns about Oklahoma, and with what appeared to be a profound desire to keep from learning what the Chinese puzzle was all about. Hurley, who once was considered about the best-dressed man in Washington, was immaculate in tropical gabardine. He was so covered with campaign ribbons that one American officer who had known him for many years looked at him

quizzically and said: “Pat, you’ve got on every ribbon known to the War Department except Shays’ Rebellion.”

Hurley was having a wonderful time. He played his role of “personal representative of the President” to the hilt. Chinese officials, quick to sense Hurley’s love for personal exhibitionism, wined, dined, and wooed him to an extent seldom seen before. They flattered the American until he forgot his mission of making the Generalissimo get together with Mao. Supremely ignorant of what had gone on before, Hurley suddenly clasped the Gimo to his bosom and notified the President that the trouble in China was based largely on personality clashes between Stilwell and Chiang and the removal of the American general would solve the problem. Later he systematically removed every American diplomat who knew anything about China and, on his own authority, placed the weight of the United States Government solidly behind Chiang in the prosecution of civil war rather than the unification of China by negotiation and compromise.

Hurley’s recommendation that Stilwell be recalled tipped the scales although the President exchanged a few more messages with Chiang after the recommendation. There were many who believed that Chiang might have given in despite the Hurley recommendation if the President had held out for Stilwell a little longer. Stilwell is said to have received a pilot message from Marshall in which the chief of staff said something like: “Brace yourself, Joe, it’s coming,” and at 5 p.m., October 19, 1944, Stilwell received his orders to return to Washington, while the theater was split in two.

Stilwell, who used to grin with tired resignation over news of Chinese military reverses and spectacular moments in the spiral of inflation, would wisecrack: “I’ll bet the Gimo really threw a lot of teacups around when he heard that one.” He didn’t throw any teacups himself. On the surface he took it well with his upper lip practically in a plaster cast. But he was crushed. He was terribly hurt. He was, after all, a crusader who had had the props pulled out from under him when the Holy Sepulcher seemed almost in his hand. “If the President had just held out for one more exchange of radios,” one of his oldest advisers said, “we would have won.”

The general went through the formalities. He paid the proper calls to the proper people, including the Generalissimo and Ho, and took off. He flew to Paoshan on the Salween to bid farewell to his former aide and one of his closest friends, "Pinkie" Dorn. From there he flew to Myitkyina, the scene of his most notable military objective. He told Sultan what had happened but told nobody else except members of his immediate family who were stationed in the area. "I should tell all my old friends goodbye," he said, "but I can't." Later another close adviser said: They have repudiated everything Stilwell stood for after almost twenty-five years off and on in China!"

Vinegar Joe flew to Delhi, where he cleaned up personal affairs and prepared to fly to Washington. The general had made CBI the toughest theater in the war in which to be decorated. Refusing to wear any of his many decorations himself, he insisted that decorations must be hard to get and given as far as possible to men in combat. As a parting sentimental gesture, however, his last order bestowed the Bronze Star Medal on all those who walked out of Burma with him in 1942. He gave it to everybody except himself. He was the one American on that historic march who should have received a decoration, because he, and he alone, saved the lives of 114 people by the sheer force of his indomitable spirit, the disregard for the softening amenities, and the ruthless drive which whipped the pilgrimage through the jungles, over the mountains and rivers to safety ahead of the Japanese, the Chinese, and the monsoon.

This determined and dedicated man, embittered by the adversity of what he considered to be a disgraceful defeat, shocked by the human frailties and foibles of his own people, seemingly abandoned by everybody including God, led his motley and tattered band to the safety of India in spite of itself. Although few kind words were spoken, although contemptuous insult became the accepted method of conversation, there was a certain nobility about Vinegar Joe Stilwell in those days which even yet may or may not be thoroughly appreciated by those he saved. It would have been so simple to have taken the easy way out by flying to India from Shwebo. But, having refused to take the easy way, the general then assumed full responsibility for getting his band to safety despite the enemy, the Chinese, and even the

elements. He won, as he won in almost everything else, because this truly simple man was incapable of admitting defeat.

The Boss received a message from Hearn just before he left Delhi for home. Chiang, said Hearn, wished to present China's highest decoration to Stilwell. True to himself and his ideals, and conscious of the essential hypocrisy of the political exchange of decorations between nations, Stilwell curtly refused. Later he refused the British Order of the Bath. Despite years in foreign service, where diplomatic ribbons are expected to fall like leaves, Stilwell rarely accepted a foreign award, with the exception of the French Legion of Honor and a Panamanian decoration—both during World War I.

The message refusing the China decoration was his last in CBI. The next to the last was a warm personal message to Lord Louis. "It's disappointing not to be able to finish my job in the theater," he wrote, "but I'm glad I had an opportunity to play a small part in a large undertaking. I offer my best wishes for great success in your forthcoming operations. When news of that success reaches me I shall be one of the first to throw my hat in the air."

With equal warmth Mountbatten replied: "You are leaving behind you the reputation of being a great fighting general, and I know just how you'll miss the opportunity of continuing your drive south and being in at the finish. I always had the greatest admiration for your fighting qualities. Your telegram of good wishes was very much appreciated and I want to wish you the best luck, whatever your new assignment may be." They liked each other in spite of everything.

The old Stilwell hands were crushed when the word got around. At first they simply couldn't believe it. They had always half expected something like this, but the promotion to a full general seemed to have cleared the air once and for all. The little people, such as Gus Reynault, Windam Braud, and the members of his bodyguard, were heartbroken. To them Joe Stilwell was a warm and unpretentious god. One of those who stood to gain most by the recall felt the worst. Sitting in his bombed-out Myitkyina bungalow, Dan Sultan, the new India-Burma Theater commander (Wedemeyer got the China Theater after the split), repeated the same phrase over and over: "This is a calamity."

Dan Sultan, to coin a trite phrase, was one of Nature's noblemen. Through no choice of his own he had been relieved from the command of an army corps about to fight in Europe, to be relegated to the political manipulation and public obscurity of a job as Stilwell's deputy. The fact that Stilwell had him promoted to lieutenant general was of small moment. Generals like Sultan lie awake nights praying for combat assignments. But Sultan came to the CBI Theater and sold himself to an always skeptical theater commander by his hard, faithful, and occasionally brilliant work. He subordinated himself completely, remained absolutely anonymous except in the councils of war, and earned from Stilwell a respect and affection as strong as they were mutual. One incident illustrates the bond that existed between the two. Colonel Dean Rusk, one of the top CBI planners, was directed by Sultan to produce a certain paper. He did so, and Sultan read it over before Rusk was to take it to Kandy for Stilwell's approval. "This looks all right to me," Sultan said, "but do you think it is what General Stilwell wants? I want to be absolutely sure this is exactly what he wants." Rusk took the paper to Kandy and presented it to The Boss. Stilwell read it over, asked a couple of questions, and said: "This looks all right to me, but is it what General Sultan wants? I want to be sure this paper follows his ideas."

The general reaction of the command to the recall was mixed. The great contrasts were presented by NCAC and the 14th Air Force. At Stilwell's old combat headquarters there was nothing but deep sadness and gloom. "What's the use of going on?" everybody asked. These people weren't fighting for China or for anything except Stilwell. Their peerless homespun leader was gone. At Kunming the 14th Air Force literally declared a holiday. There was emotional dancing in the streets—there was until it was discovered that Chennault would not become commander of the China Theater. To a command fed on the propaganda that Stilwell was senile and the first enemy of air power this was a happy event indeed. Down on the Stilwell Road the reaction was curious. These American troops rarely saw the general and disliked him thoroughly as the author of the Stilwell Road, which they considered the bad dream of a bunch of China lovers. His use of the engineers at Myitkyina had lowered his prestige further among men who never at any time understood why they were forced to work and sweat in India and Burma anyway. But the recall changed that. All along the road

soldiers remarked: “Say, he wasn’t such a bad guy after all. He didn’t like the Chinese any better than we do. He’s been fighting them all the time.”

Stilwell went home and Wedemeyer went to Chungking. Some of the truth about China finally broke out in the American press through rigid Chinese and American censorship. Stilwell became the only general in American military history ever to be removed from a command by request and gain prestige thereby. Wedemeyer, on the other hand, had to pick up where The Boss left off. One official in the know said: “I would hate to be in Wedemeyer’s shoes with old Pat Hurley sitting there breathing down the back of my neck.” Hurley and Wedemeyer got along so well that they had to issue joint public statements of mutual esteem even as Lord Louis and Auchinleck.

Stilwell never quite lost his sense of humor. After he assumed command of the Tenth Army on Okinawa he wrote to a friend as follows:

..... I appreciate your endorsement because you have seen me in trouble and running away. You wouldn’t kid me, would you? The Japanese have started to and I don’t know how to answer them. They have announced that this assignment shows how short of generals the Americans are getting. If I mention our list of some 1,600, they’ll say, “We still claim the Americans must be short of generals," and I'll be worse off than before. If you can think up a proper crack, let me have at; I'm stuck.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had pulled off one of the master political strokes of the war. His aim was always to get as much Lend-Lease as possible and never put it into action against the Japanese. The idea was to use it against the Communists. When Hurley and Nelson came to China, it seemed that their demands, plus the cataclysmic loss of Chennault’s bases, had him at last in a corner from which he could not squirm. By the doubly shrewd maneuver of demanding Stilwell’s recall he suddenly placed the entire situation on the basis of personalities. He accused Stilwell of rudeness, disobedience, and downright incompetence. He blamed Stilwell for the loss of the airfields. He said Stilwell’s insistence on the Salween campaign had weakened the eastern front. He then stated that Stilwell was personally obnoxious, and said that he would meet all American demands if the fly in the ointment were withdrawn. Roosevelt’s published attitude was

one of “if the head of a state demands the recall of an American general there is nothing I can do but recall him.” That is true, certainly, in orthodox diplomatic procedure.

The War Department refused to permit Wedemeyer to assume any command responsibility over Chinese troops. Wedemeyer could replace Stilwell as Chiang’s American chief of staff, a purely advisory position, but the new theater commander was not permitted to assume any command authority over the Chinese Army in China. Sultan was given command over the Chinese in Burma, but a large part of these were flown to Kunming to meet the Japanese threat. They did not meet the Japanese because the Japanese retraced their steps after reaching Kweiyang. The Generalissimo permitted the United States Air Force to fly a token force of Chinese Nationalist troops from the Communist front to the eastern front, but the Chinese never quite got down to the point of firing any shots in anger until they turned on the governor of Yunnan and ousted him, long after the war was over. Chen Cheng replaced Ho as war minister, but Ho retained the far more important position of chief of staff. Ho was flown to Kunming to assume command of the field forces, and cynical Americans thought about packing their bags to get out before the “savior of Kunming” could lose all of Yunnan.

Wedemeyer played the smooth political game. He exchanged well-publicized dinners with the Generalissimo. He criticized American critics of the Chinese, and finally gave an interview to Collier's, in which he lauded the Generalissimo and indicated that Chiang was doing everything possible against the Japanese. He joined with the Chinese in glittering generalities about the great offensive that was coming.

The great offensive began after the war, when American aircraft and ships started moving Kuomintang armies to strategic points, presumably to disarm the Japanese Army, but actually putting them in a position to attack the Communists. This is not written as criticism of Wedemeyer. Undoubtedly he had his orders. It is reasonably safe to assume that, with the recall of Stilwell, the War Department had written China off the books as a positive force in the campaign to defeat Japan, and wished to continue to go through the motions of aid to China with a maximum of harmony. The War

Department had been sick of the whole mess for a long time. In light of postwar American activities, it may be assumed also that the United States Government was going to persist in its policy of keeping Chiang in power.

Over on the British side of the fence a curious thing happened. The nation which had been so conscientiously fighting a cheap war suddenly went to work like mad behind the scenes to get the Eastern Fleet transferred to the Southwest Pacific. The British wanted the fleet integrated with the various United States Navy task forces. You integrate and the operation becomes Allied. You put a British battalion in the midst of an American army corps and the operation immediately becomes Allied—in the papers, that is. The British were worried about what their position would be at the Japanese peace table.

The Japanese Navy had ceased to exist as an entity and, in terms of total casualties, naval engagements don't cost so much anyway, so the British suddenly thirsted for some of that Southwest Pacific blood. The United States Navy resisted them all the way, but Churchill won at the second Quebec Conference. After the meeting the Prime Minister made a significant statement. "The only point at issue," he announced, "was America's desire to do more than her share in the Pacific. That has been settled."

Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser steamed his ancient Eastern Fleet to Australia in preparation for later operations. The United States Navy won a partial victory, however. They won in their insistence that the British Fleet must fight as a complete task force and be responsible entirely for its own supply. This was somewhat modified later when Admiral Halsey permitted some British integration with his Third Fleet. British units ran out of everything from time to time and fliers from the Saratoga even flew food to British carriers. This was known as the potato patrol.

The recall of Vinegar Joe Stilwell was, in itself, historically unimportant. In a world being torn to pieces by the greatest war in the history of human civilization, what does it matter what happens to individual actors? What did it matter that one man, who had done more with less than any general of the war, should find himself suddenly repudiated? History is not concerned with the feelings of hired minions of governments and their followers, and

that is as it should be. Total wars, by their very scope, must be fought impersonally. As a generality people must cease to be people for the time and become serial numbers.

EPILOGUE

THE POST WAR WORLD

What went on in Asia is of historical importance, because it was a rather sordid drama of how allies should not get along which may have powerful repercussions in the future. What is going to be the result now that hundreds of thousands of troops who finally reached that theater come home? What will be the result on public opinion and its mouthpiece, the Congress, if these soldiers sit down in their bars, in their homes, and in their clubs to discuss those lousy British and Chinese? They will discuss their former Allies without any conception of why they acted as they did in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. Often what has been done is not so important as why it was done.

The United States must, in its own self-interest, be joined economically and politically with Britain and China for many years to come whether or not such association is through the UN or unilaterally. Foreign policy vis-a-vis the two thus becomes of great importance. Foreign policy in the last analysis is based on public opinion—on what Congress will put up with. In the negotiations for a large loan to Britain America offered Britain a hard, strictly cold-blooded business proposition when, according to published reports, most of the American negotiators and interested members of the executive branch of the Government privately agreed that they wished to do much better for the British and felt the British were entitled to something much better. They said, however, that the proposition they offered was all Congress would accept. This was symptomatic of latent American suspicion and hostility to the British, which has grown now that the common enemy is gone.

As time goes on Americans are going to become more and more conscious of the decadence, corruption, and anti-foreign hostility of Chiang's Koumintang regime. They are going to get the stories of the men who were there about how the Chinese wouldn't fight, about graft and fantastic incompetence in the Chinese Army. Americans, not knowing anything approaching the whole story, and traditionally misguided by the ultimate

fallacy of judging a foreign people by their own standards, will judge the Chinese by their Kuomintang leaders. Nothing could be more in error than that, because it is doubtful whether there is a race in the world possessed of more inherent strength and decency than the Chinese. Plagued by an anachronistic feudalism of economy and government, the victims of the vicissitudes of nature in which hundreds of thousands may die from plague, floods, or famine, the dupes of a regime which keeps them illiterate and makes them the victims of the most vicious landlord system on earth, the Chinese people have a sense of humor, patience, and industry that amount to a racial nobility which Americans could do worse than to study and respect.

Despite all that can be said against Chiang and his satraps, they must be given full marks for one thing—they did not surrender or make a deal with the Japanese. This can be minimized by the thought that the Kuomintang knew America would win the war, hence there was nothing to gain by surrender, but the question of motive seems trivial when it is measured against the concrete fact that more than 1,000,000 Japanese troops, troops that might have been used elsewhere, were in China at the end of hostilities. Regardless of motives and refusals actually to fight on the eastern front, the Chinese made a solid contribution to the victory simply by not surrendering. But now that the war is over, should America keep this decadent regime in power, or at least aid in keeping it in the saddle?

In the mellow light of retrospect which must come to some, certainly, after the end of war, Britain's actions become more understandable. Here was an empire ruled by 40,000,000 people on a small, damp island. These people were led by a man who boldly presumed to halt Britain's normal evolutionary descent to the position of a third-rate power by lifting the nation on the bootstraps of his own indomitable will. Winston Churchill didn't want just to win the war. He wanted to win the war in a manner so that Britain would still be a first-rate power, possessing sufficient reserve to be able to fight another war if another should come. To do this he must preserve the Empire by keeping control of the colonies and commit British troops in such a way that a generation of the best of British manhood would not be lost. This was not a course designed to win any friends for "perfidious Albion." It was the realistic implementation of a philosophy to

fight to the last drop of our Allies' blood. Churchill seems to have won the battle so far, but the payoff will come later. Will Britain, who has never given up an acre of land except at the point of a gun, lose her Empire now that the war has been won? Will India be able to gird herself sufficiently to throw off the yoke of the hated British Raj? Will Britain be able to get the economic assistance she must have from the United States as the facts about Churchill's cheap war inevitably become known? Will America return to some form of isolationism, thereby abandoning Britain to her fate?

These are terribly pregnant questions to war veterans who should, whether they do or not, hope for an America giving full cooperation in a community of friendly nations. Every veteran has one passionate hope—he hopes he will never again have to go to war. But to keep out of war he must be willing for his nation to assume full international responsibility, and pay whatever price in aid to former Allies and in occupation forces that will be required for the peace. This will not be if the veterans, returning embittered and cynical about the Allies, are not given some perspective of what wars actually are made of. They must be given a perspective composed of realities, and not high-blown generalities. There must be something more than historical half-truths and evasions among Allies, who at last have plenty of time to fight among themselves.

That is why Americans became so bitter in many cases in this war. They were not taught that wars are fought by Allies who are human beings, loyal to their respective nationalistic or personal aims ahead of the common good. They were not taught that, in the last analysis, wars are not fought for any nebulous Four Freedoms. Wars are fought by countries such as Britain, China, and the United States, to preserve economic and political sovereignty and the Empire. They are fought to preserve the freedom of governments rather than the freedom of peoples. They are fought to maintain the status quo as a springboard for nationalistic economic exploitation in the future. There doesn't seem to be anything so unnatural in such ambitions that they should be masked behind high spiritual double talk. That is the kind of ambition practical people should understand in a world devoted to nationalism.

Although the United States is sentimentally against Imperialism, Americans who desire the freedom of India should be broad enough to understand British reluctance to grant such freedom, when to do so would threaten her world-wide economic position. British statesmen, regardless of party, are no more altruistic about the future of India than are American property owners discussing the prospects of dividing their holdings among the proletariat in some form of Communism. Few people willingly give away anything considered essential to life, regardless of the odium of retention.

Also any Americans thinking of a military alliance with Britain to counteract Russia's muscle-flexing had better forget their yearning for freedom for the Asiatics. Should such a military alliance ever become a fact, British-ruled global bases will be pretty handy things to have around.

To have any chance for a new world Americans must realize that all races are human. As such they are essentially selfish. They must realize that Britain, for instance, is neither populated nor led by a group of evil men. They must realize that, in many respects, the British are the most decent people in the world. For instance, they were the first to speak out against the suffering of the common people in postwar Germany. They spoke out, despite the bombings of London, Coventry, and the rest. Americans must never forget that the British are courageous in their own bumbling, understating manner. Like the Chinese, they didn't quit either. With all his hatred for British politics and politicians, Stilwell said over and over again: "You've got to give them credit for one thing: they didn't quit. They've got guts."

Much of the bitterness in Asia might have been avoided if Americans had been taught more of the facts of international relations; if Americans could have understood that in this world there are some points of view other than American, and that the proponents of such points of view have what amounts to an almost American conception of their infallibility. Americans might try to cultivate some humility in dealing with other races, and not be so obvious in their philosophy that Americans are the only efficient people in the world. When talking about Chinese and French thievery Americans might stop and remember the American black-market scandals in Europe and American smuggling over The Hump. When talking of the superiority

of American-arms they might remember Stalingrad and the hundreds of thousands of Russians who died so that that ruined city would not be taken.

But Americans will not think in such terms unless they are taught by courageous political leaders at home. They were not taught before the war, and there is little indication they will be taught now. Maybe they can't be taught. The War Department spent millions of dollars on an orientation program in Europe. This program had two basic aims—to make the Americans respect their Allies and to hate the Germans. Two months after hostilities ceased American soldiers leaped into the warm, Teutonic arms of fraternization, and were convinced that the Germans were the only good people in Europe. They felt that the French were the worst. Probably there are many reasons behind such a reaction. One, certainly, is the American respect for industry, efficiency, and cleanliness. These are German qualities not equaled by other European races. The war veteran might stop to ponder what price such an efficiency and industry that require a war every twenty years and a police force in between to keep them from conquering the world.

Perhaps orientation failed in its purpose because of War Department and State Department coyness about telling unpleasant facts. Throughout the war in Asia American soldiers were fed the line about the resistance of the Chinese. To Americans watching the fiasco of the eastern front this was not only propaganda, but stupid propaganda. Perhaps the failure to tell some simple truths about the China situation, and then frankly explain what the Americans were doing in an effort to correct what was wrong, was not altogether the fault of the War Department. A prominent War Department general told this writer as early as November 1943 that the War Department was anxious to tell the China story, but that Secretary of State Cordell Hull insisted it not be told. Officers experienced with GIs know that the American soldier will do a lot of unpleasant things willingly, and without resentment, if he understands why he is being asked to do them. At one time Marshall, worried about the GI attitude, directed all theater commanders to publish orientation material telling the soldiers in their respective commands why they were there. That was a problem for Stilwell. To him truth is a fetish. He called in the editor of the Roundup and ordered something run in the paper. "Shall I tell the truth?" the editor asked. "Don't

tell any lies," Stilwell replied, "and print as much of the truth as you can without getting me put in jail."

As this book is being written the official CBI Theater History is about to be written for the third time. This 285,000- word document was prepared by the CBI historical section from all the documents, files, and records of the theater. It was forwarded to the War Department, and revised once in an effort to remove some of the international dynamite. It is being revised again in what appears to be an attempt to whitewash the British and Chinese before the history is published. This seems to be a mistake. A whitewash, while observing the diplomatic niceties, will not fool those who know anything about the history of the theater, and will lead to an endless series of public political rebuttals. It will accomplish little except deepen public suspicion that the War Department is incapable generally of telling the truth —or all the truth—when unpleasant facts are present.

A little more candor from all concerned might be helpful in this uneasy world. The ambiguous deception of the British communiqué, the flights of fancy of the Chinese military spokesman, and the official American refusal completely to face facts, should be relegated to the limbo of a war that was fought and won unenthusiastically but gloriously by the combat soldiers, but may have been muffed by the statesmen. In this post world-war era American veterans and non-veterans alike should be interested in the Truman policy toward China announced after the Hurley resignation and the appointment of General Marshall as his successor. It is obvious from President Truman's directive that America has returned to the Roosevelt-Stilwell policy of bringing pressure on the Generalissimo to unify China by negotiation and the inclusion of the Communists and other dissident factions in the government. This repudiates the Hurley philosophy of the all-out support of Chiang's plan to unify China by the military liquidation of his Chinese enemies.

The United States Government is persisting in its policy of supporting the Chiang regime so long as the dynasty makes an honest effort to produce a democratic government representative of the different Chinese political groups. This is being done presumably on the grounds that Chiang heads the recognized Chinese Government and has the greatest following of any

of the leaders. In considering this point it is worthy of note that Chiang has little “following” as such but has the biggest and best-equipped armies to insure the “loyalty” of what has always been a pliant peasantry.

This policy may be in the best interests of peace in the Orient. But in the implementation of this policy the citizens of this nation should be aware of Chiang’s record of broken promises and deceit and should watch and judge him accordingly. So long as this country is intervening in the internal affairs of China with a basic philosophy of keeping the Gimo on the throne the citizens of this country should demand an immediate cessation of that support the moment it appears that Chiang is reverting to type. This country should remember also that Mao might win out over the Generalissimo and, if so, where does that put America in the Orient?

There is some evidence that Chiang may be on the way out. If he refrains from double-crossing Marshall by military action against the Communists and democratic intellectuals at the last minute he will be faced by a Chinese democratic government which, in all probability, will not keep him long in office. He evidently recognized this when he hinted recently that he may step down after unification has become a fact. In light of the past, however, it seems doubtful that he would abdicate voluntarily.

If America is to realize her potential as a leader in the community of nations she must be willing to assume her proper share of responsibility, whether that involves the furnishing of occupation troops, or even outright intervention, where the Administration feels such a course is inevitable for the preservation of peace or to protect United States interests. But America will not assure such responsibilities unless the American people are brought to understand and appreciate, on all levels, the practical realities of international relations. At the same time, those countries who desire active American participation in the world community must not publicly agree to courses of action, and then sabotage them, as the British sabotaged agreed military plans in SEAC. They must not keep breaking their word, as did the Chinese in their relations with Stilwell, and afterward when they failed to strike at the enemy.

There must be honesty, because, without it, there can be no more mutual confidence or good will than existed in Asia during the war. There must be

frank recognition of conflicting aims and aspirations, and the parties involved must then agree to and abide by courses of action for the common good. This calls for compromise, but isn't compromise the essence of democracy? Reasoning behind such agreements should not be bottled in the sacred archives of the top level, but should be passed down to the people, who must live and work together to implement such policies. Agreement at the top is of little permanent value if the people below do not understand the why of such agreements.

In the last analysis there can be no harmony between allies unless, first and foremost, agreements are kept. Joe Stilwell, with all his vinegar, would have gotten along if the British and Chinese had kept their commitments. Tolerance does not walk hand in hand with the double-cross, any more than the web of mutual understanding can be spun from the thread of truth evasion. If there is to be a successful post-war world there must be open discussion of the foibles, the stresses, and the disputes within the United Nations of World War II, in order that the peace-loving peoples of the world may profit from the mistakes of the past.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CHINESE

Sixth Army: Led by General Kan. A third-rate warlord army with an incompetent commander. The Sixth was composed of three weak divisions of about 6,000 men each; the 55th Division, commanded by General Chen. 22d Division commanded by General Liao Yao-hsiang. The divisions were poorly equipped.

Fifth Army: commanded by General Tu Li-ming. 200th Division commanded General Tai An-lan.

38th Division: commanded by General Sun Li-jen. The 38th was much improved, trained and refitted at Ramgarh. Vanguard of the Sixty-sixth Army and reactivated. Sun was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and had taken an engineering degree at Purdue.

22d Division: General Liao Yao-hsiang. 22d was much improved, trained and refitted at Ramgarh and reactivated.

Sixteen Chinese divisions under Marshal Wei Li-haung in Yunnan.

General Lo Cho-ying: Stilwell's Chinese executive officer; he would act as Stilwell's executive and see that the latter's orders were carried out.

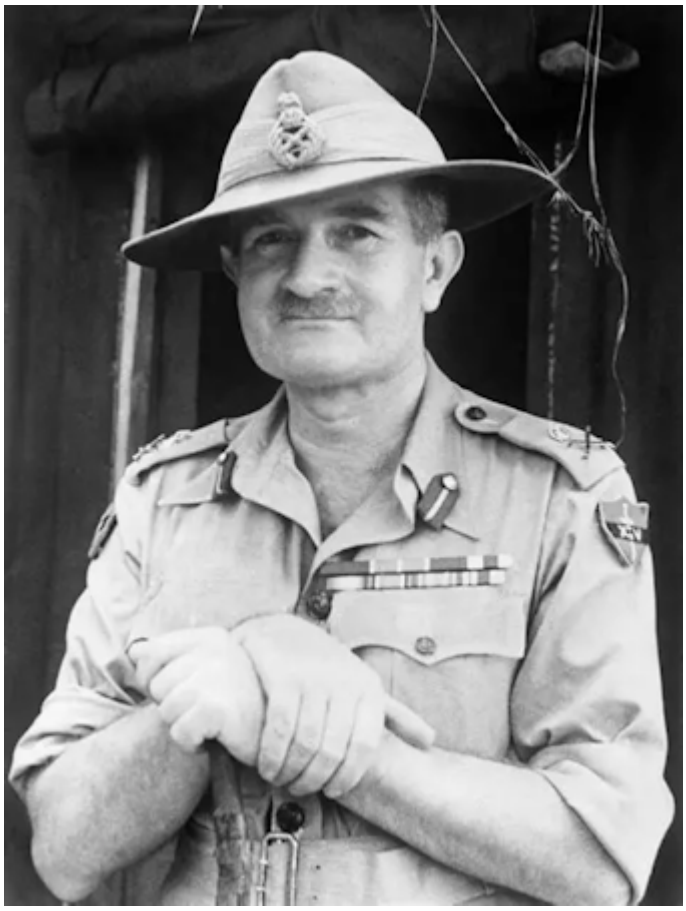
Yu Fei-peng, China's Director of Transportation.

Ho Ying-chin: Chinese Minister of War.

Mysterious General Wong.

Madam Chiang: né May-ling Soong.

BRITISH



General W.J. Slim held the field command as general officer commanding the 1st Burma Corps. This command included the two divisions plus a few odds and ends. Later, he commanded the Fourteenth Army with signal distinction.

Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert de la Ferté, Mountbatten's deputy chief of staff for public information and civil affairs. Joubert had direct, personal, and secret orders from Churchill on the conduct of propaganda and public relations. He also controlled distribution of all SEAC publicity and propaganda information.

Mr. Charles Eade: editor of the London Sunday Dispatch sent by Churchill to Kandy.

JAPANESE

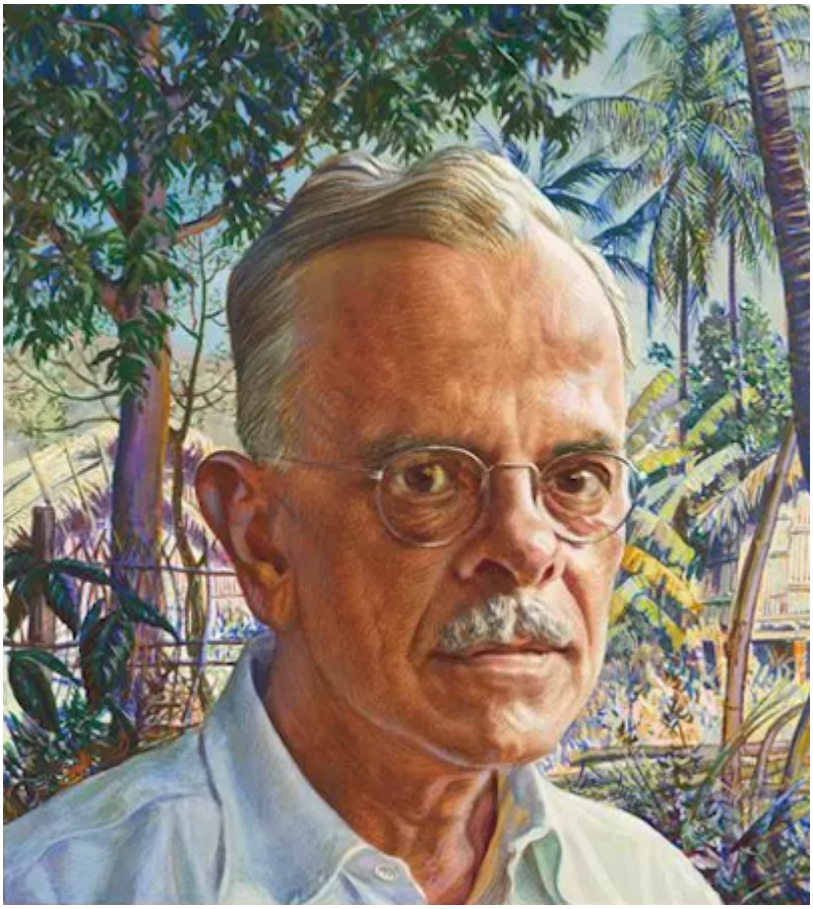
Japanese 18th division: Late in 1943, Renya Mutaguchi was promoted, and replaced in command of the division by Lieutenant-General Shinichi Tanaka. Transferred to the Japanese Thirty-Third Army, and operations in northern Burma, 18th Division fought against the American-led Chinese divisions advancing on Mogaung and Myitkyina, and against the British Chindits operating behind their lines.

Renya Mutaguchi

Lieutenant-General Shinichi Tanaka

AMERICAN

Dr. Gordon S. Seagrave: American missionary doctor. He wrote two books; one about his missionary work in Burma, the latter about his medical service during the war in Burma.



Lieutenant Colonel St. Clair McKelway former managing editor of The New Yorker.

Brigadier General Ray Maddocks, chief of the American planners on the SEAC staff.

Colonel Haydon L. Boatner: chief liaison officer with the Chinese forces in Yunnan. Chief of staff Chih Hui Pu (Chinese for Chinese Expeditionary Force.)

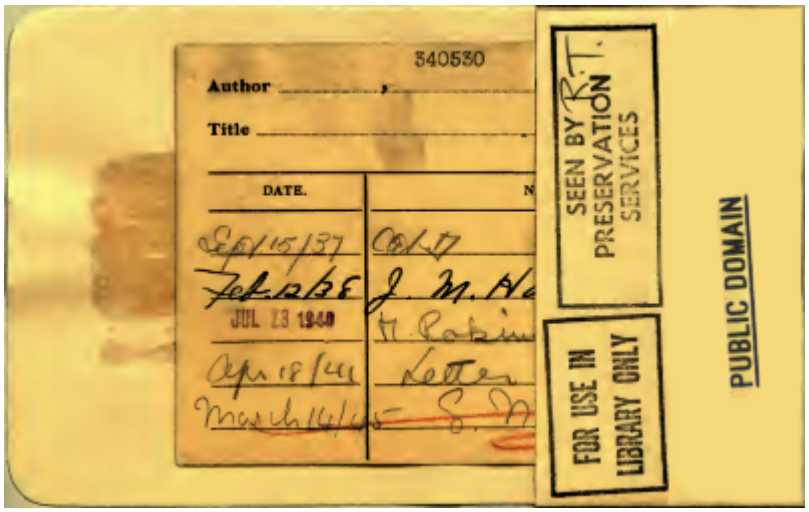
Colonel Frederick McCabe: liaison officer with the Chinese Sixth Army.

Ramgarh: Bihar Province, India. Chinese troop training facility.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fred Eldridge ex-police reporter.

END



PD Public Domain